
MEETING	CHILDHOOD OBESITY TASK GROUP
DATE	1 MARCH 2010
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS SUE GALLOWAY, SIMPSON-LAING AND WISEMAN

1. CHAIR

RESOLVED: That Councillor Wiseman be appointed as Chair of the Childhood Obesity Task Group.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak at the meeting under the Council's Public Participation Scheme.

3. CHILDHOOD OBESITY REVIEW

Members considered a report, which set out further information to inform their review into childhood obesity.

The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that an interim report setting out the information received to date would be presented to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 29 March.

The Chair introduced the attendees and the Task Group received presentations in relation to the following:

- i) School Travel Plans and the role of the School Travel Plan Adviser – Christine Packer, School Travel Plan Coordinator

Officers confirmed that there was a Government target for Local Authorities to deliver travel plans for 100% of schools in the city by the end of March 2010, however there was no obligation on the school to produce the Plans. She went onto explain the objectives of Travel Plans and the resources provided to produce them. She detailed the role of the School Travel Adviser including the promotion of sustainable travel to school and linking with other City of York Council teams.

The following information was given in relation to School Travel Plans and childhood obesity:

- Healthy schools agenda - 6.7% of reception children were classed as obese but by Year 6 this had risen to 16.7%.
- Details of the key initiatives in improving children's health and fitness on their trip to school, including successes.
- Usual mode of travel to school monitored by school census data;

- 2010/11 proposals to identify schools with the potential for modal shift;
- Evidence had shown that children who cycled/walked to school were healthier and fitter than those that travelled by bus/car. Cardiovascular function of those that walked was also greater.

Arising out of this presentation Members questioned a number of points and commented as follows:

- Need of promotions of car sharing and use of Park and Ride site for children attending Bootham School;
- Issue of children living on the outside of the ring road and having to cross the bypass with no safe walking/cycle route to school;
- Working parents dropping children at school en-route to work;
- Difficulties in re-educating parents in relation to the benefits of walking/cycling;
- Introducing a competitive element in an endeavour to change behaviour;
- School engagement and enthusiastic staff required for promotion;
- Parking enforcement required at all schools;
- Need to make walking/cycling part of the school day;
- Possible regular events to make walking to school more interesting;
- Often insufficient parental support to sustain 'Walking Buses';
- Travel Plans did not currently cover child minders;
- Details of cycle/scooter storage at all schools;
- Church schools often had a higher percentage of children being driven to school as their catchment areas were much larger.

ii) How Day Nurseries in York Contribute to Healthy Food and Exercise – Rosemary Flanagan, Early Years Childcare Manager/Ken McArthur, Private Nursery Provider

A briefing note was circulated which set out how day nurseries in York contributed to healthy food and exercise, which included:

- Currently 43 day nurseries across the city, most being operated by private providers;
- Ofsted do not inspect against Healthy Eating in nurseries;
- Telephone questionnaire undertaken to understand ways in which the different day-care settings offered meals and outdoor opportunities for children;
- Of 42 nurseries that replied, 37 provided hot meals, the remainder asked families to provide packed lunches;
- Of these 37 nurseries most had cooks/chefs who held cooking qualifications, including child nutrition;
- Over 95% of nurseries had Healthy Eating policies;
- 60% of nurseries confirmed that their food was locally sourced where possible;
- Importance of meal times being 'social events' where children were served meals at tables with staff interaction;
- All nurseries provided healthy snacks;
- Children in all nurseries were currently or would shortly be planting and growing food;

- All children had the opportunity to play outside on a daily basis and quiet spaces or rooms were provided.

Officers reported that between 10 and 20 years ago obesity had been a high priority and that it had formed part of nursery inspections, this was no longer the case.

There was also confirmation that all nursery providers in York had mentioned healthy food, fresh fruit, sleep and the opportunities for outside play and although there had been insufficient time to survey childminders it was felt that their answers would have been similar. Parents were also very aware of the need for good nutrition particularly as some children were in nursery from 8.00am to 6.00pm with all their food being provided on site.

Members expressed their appreciation for the excellent picture in relation to nurseries and their promotion of healthy eating in the city.

The private nursery provider confirmed that until 2003 all nurseries were required to have a proper kitchen and to provide home cooked meals on site but unfortunately this was no longer the case. As Chair of the local National Day Nursery Association Network he confirmed that an integral part of a good nursery was its kitchen. Many kitchens in the city were 100% organic; with many not having deep fat fryers and 'Five a day' had been nursery policy for a number of years. He felt that the culture of 'pack ups' had not helped together with parental concerns over menus at a number of primary schools.

Members made the following points in relation to this presentation:

- It was often cost rather than choice in children bringing pack-ups;
- Interesting that problems appeared to start at primary school rather than at nursery;
- Questioned how the authority could promote continuation of healthy eating into primary schools;
- Supervision of pack-up and the time set aside to eat them was required;
- Children's eating habits were hard to change by the age of 6/7 years;
- 'Altogether Better' project in Scarborough to help individuals and communities eat more healthily, be more physical and improve their mental health should be investigated further;
- Cookery courses which included grandparents in preparing cheap, healthy and nutritious meals;
- Link between child behaviour, diet and sleep;
- Shock tactics often best deterrent.

iii) Positive Activity and Alternative Learning – Paul Herring, Head of Young Peoples Services

Members were informed that part of the role of Head of Young Peoples Services was to try and ensure the well being of all young people but that unfortunately their efforts were constantly being undermined.

Officers then provided a presentation in relation to their work in Young Peoples Services and how the changing way of life contributed to an unhealthy lifestyle for young people today. He referred to the various challenges, which included the increase in computer games and the changing picture in relation to lifestyles and the use of spare time.

Members made a number of comments on the presentation including:

- Although people appeared to have more time, the tendency for both parents to work, longer hours of work and commuting added time to the day;
- Lack of community facilities for young people, although this was disputed by Officers;
- Challenge to change young peoples views;
- Members felt that achievements required rewards;
- It appeared that a gap had now emerged that those who were perceived as less able often resorted to comfort in food, many with resultant weight problems;
- Obesity problems were not as prevalent during war time and rationing;
- BOGOF (Buy One Get One Free) food offers and waste;
- URBIE (Urban Rural Bus Information Education) bus sessions and methods of tackling the healthy eating message;
- Possible Primary/Secondary School links to York College catering courses and use of school kitchens;
- Other authorities investigations into obesity and use of best practise;
- Take up of school meals within other Local Authorities and like for like comparisons.

The Group considered the need for the arrangement of a public event to further inform the topic but they felt that they had sufficient information to progress this without the need for a public event, at the present time.

Members then asked for additional information in relation to the following:

- What other Local Authorities were doing in relation to childhood obesity and comparison of information on like for like Authorities to possibly include Scarborough;
- York residents' waste figures;
- Email of anonymised information on school meal take up to include details of weekly menus in Primary and Secondary Schools (in differing social areas in the city), with popular choices including a school not using North Yorkshire County Council catering;
- Details of a child's compulsory physical activity programme (PE timetable) in both Primary and Secondary schools;
- Requesting the attendance of a representative of the Food Standards Agency in relation to supermarket labeling, to attend the next Task Group meeting.

RESOLVED: i) That the presentations and briefing be noted;

- ii) That the next Task Group meeting take place on 19 April 2010 at 5.30pm;
- iii) That, at this stage, no public event be held in connection with this review.

REASON: In order to progress this review.

CLLR S WISEMAN, Chair

[The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 4.15 pm].