

Consultation Comments

1. Councillor Carol Runciman – Executive Member for Children’s Services

I am happy to support this scrutiny topic. It is an important and relevant subject that is of current concern and will give the opportunity to gather evidence from a number of agencies working in this field. I look forward to receiving the resulting recommendations.

2. Paul Murphy - Assistant Director (Partnerships & Early Intervention) Learning, Culture & Children’s Services

We think it would be an excellent scrutiny topic - in that it is clearly a matter of public interest and yet is containable in terms of its scope. It touches on several agendas - healthy city, learning city - and involves partnership working across health, local authority and third sectors. The topic is certainly feasible & worthwhile and is very much a current issue that has come to the top of the policy agenda relatively recently. It is being tackled from a variety of directions by a number of partners and it would be worth using the scrutiny process to take stock of all of this.

On the assumption that officers' involvement would be confined to provision of information and oral evidence, we think the resource implications would be containable and would assign lead responsibility within the Directorate to the Children’s Trust Unit should any review go ahead.

We regard the Children's Trust Unit, managed by Judy Kent, as "owning" the NPI within the Directorate, although many different service arms have an interest in it.

One other issue that might be relevant, and convenient in terms of timing, is that City of York Council is hosting the major national NEEC (North of England Education Conference) from 6-8 January 2010. One of our sponsors is the Schools Food Trust, and on the afternoon of Thursday 7 January they are running a Workshop at York College on how the design of School dining areas and menus can improve the take-up of healthy foods.

In terms of work taking place elsewhere there are a variety of initiatives, some of them fairly new, but nothing that exactly matches the terms of the scrutiny topic.

3. Bill Hodson – Director of Housing & Adult Social Services

I have seen Paul Murphy’s positive response, which covers the main focus of this request - childhood obesity. Councillor Galloway has also suggested that the remit should touch on adult obesity as well.

There is some justification for this both in relation to

- continuity for some young people who are in transition to adult life and who will be known to social services
- the more general need to promote and support active, healthy lifestyles in adults and the links to Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets

The only cautionary note relates to scope and timescale. If the scrutiny is to be completed within a reasonable time then the remit will need to remain quite tightly defined with the primary focus on children and young people.

4. Kathryn Yeoman - Deputy Directorate Manager/School Health Service Manager – York Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

The school health team for York, Selby and Easingwold are, as you know, weighing and measuring every school age child in mainstream school in both reception and Year 6 classes. This work has been carried out for the past 3 years.

The growth measurements are placed onto a PCT database and fed back to the Department of Health. Statistics from this data have been released and Greg McGrath has the up to date info. From this info groups are starting to form as to what is the best way forward and what is available locally for overweight children and or their families.

I think it would be a worthwhile topic to pursue. Any further information on gauging what are the best approaches to help these children and the adults of the future needs to be sustainable and equitable so further work must be required as to how this can be done and what potential resources are required.

5. Anne Robinson - Nutrition & Dietetic Services Manager - York Hospitals Trust

Information on the rates of obesity are collected as part of child health surveillance by the school nurses and this information is held in the Trust by their manager Kath Yeoman in Children's services. I am fairly certain that this information is shared with the Children's Trust and therefore with York City Council. Kath will have the details.

There is an obesity strategy group led by public health in the PCT and they have recently set up a partnership group. I am a member and so is Kath Yeoman; it is chaired by Katie Needham, consultant in public health. There have been two meetings and they are at the stage of mapping the work that is going on across the City to prevent obesity. The strategy is in line with government guidance. Greg McGrath was coordinating the mapping; he works for health Promotion in PCT. The partners were a wide variety across the city including leisure, planning and environmental health and there was lots of representation from the Children's Trust.

A wide strategic approach is being taken. As a dietetic department our involvement is the treatment of obese children and this averages one referral per week.

6. Rachel Johns - Chair of the Healthy City Board, Associate Director of Public Health & Locality Director for York (Rachel works for both the City of York Council & for NHS north Yorkshire & York)

From a Primary Care Trust perspective we would be happy to support scrutiny of this area but would want to make sure we did it collectively with the Learning Culture & Children Services team through the arrangements already set up to address childhood obesity.

As chair of the Healthy City Board I can confirm that we monitor progress in childhood obesity as a key LAA indicator (as does the YorOK Board) but as long as the review did not add to the performance burden at the expense of delivery I think it would actually be helpful to explore in more detail.

7. Greg McGrath – Health Improvement Manager, obesity - NHS North Yorkshire & York

Rachel Johns has indicated our support for this topic in Public Health terms. This is a feasible topic to proceed with and it may identify gaps in service or community need. At this stage it would be difficult to know how much time we would need to support this, but I would be happy to attend any meetings and complete any paperwork.

In terms of work taking place elsewhere; a relatively new group has been formed in York (The Healthy Weight, Active Lives Strategic Implementation Group.) The group has already met twice and is and in the future may be covering some of the areas that the Committee may be interested in.

Any work that attempts to change behaviour, generally does not have an immediate impact the following year, for example if fruit consumption rises for 2 years then this would be an indicator to expect changes in weight status maybe several years later. It is difficult to say that this intervention resulted in an outcome so answering the question is the money for obesity well spent maybe difficult.

Other areas that have a direct impact on obesity that I have very little control over the person's local environment such as the road networks, location of shops to housing estates, density of fast food outlets in deprived areas, school meal uptake, parks open spaces, and even further a field but still may impact on obesity would be job opportunities, or social mobility, housing and many other areas.

There are many programmes currently running as well as the 'Altogether Better' programme that help tackle obesity, some prioritise just childhood obesity, such as the MEND programme (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition...Do it!) and others are universal services such as cooking, food hygiene, labelling etc.

8. Comments from the LINKs Steering Group

Yes most certainly this should be a scrutiny topic. Children and their parents should be made aware that the wrong diet harms people's health now and in future years. To achieve this change in life style the whole family must be supported. We are in the middle of the school holidays, which is one of the worst times of the year for children eating the wrong type of food. Also, parents may not be aware of what their older children are buying and eating when they are not at school.

For me it's a no. Obesity in children has been in the hot seat of most schools re: the time allocated for PE, should this be included more in the timetable? If the answer is yes, what has to go to fit PE in with other lessons? School nurses are aware of this issue and working on it with school meals and the Government is educating children re: 5 a day via advertisements on TV and posters at bus stops, what else can the health Overview & Scrutiny Committee do about it?

I think that it is a good topic but find the suggestion of gathering oral and written evidence from the Council and partners a bit vague.

This is a topic I am interested in as it 'dovetails' with my day job. In the last year I have dealt with 2 pre-school children presenting as having behaviour problems where the underlying issue was their weight and inability of parents to lay down healthy eating rules in the home.