

# Systems approaches to obesity: The lived experience of young people

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# (My) Underpinning principles

- #1 Involve people with ***lived experience*** of socio-economic deprivation, obesity, malnutrition, hunger [etc] in research of relevance to public health processes/practice, intervention or policy



# (My) Underpinning principles

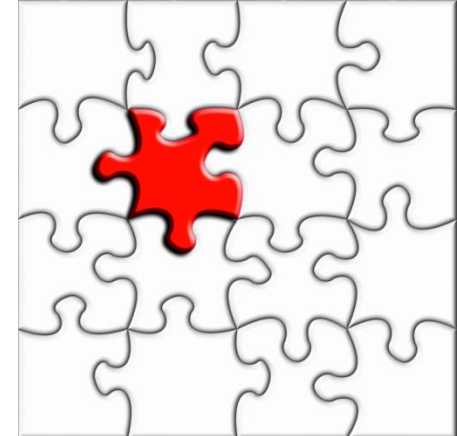
- **#2 *Social distinctions matter***: They represent *habitus*.
  - Cultural, social, economic capital inform obesity-related practices



# (My) Underpinning principles

- #3 Consider ***practices*** rather than ***behaviour*** in relation to shifting rates of obesity downwards
  - Competency [*how do we do it?*]
  - Materiality [*what do we need to do it with?*]
  - Meanings [*this is important to us because...*]

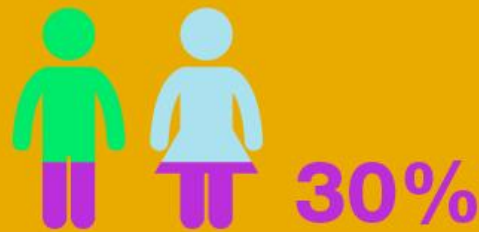
[Draws from Shove 2012; also see Warde 2005]



# The move towards / need for systems approaches to address obesity

## Obesity in children

Younger generations are becoming obese at **earlier ages** and **staying obese into adulthood**



\*Academic year 2017

Of every 100 4 and 5 years olds in England\* there are:



Of every 100 10 and 11 years olds in England\* there are:

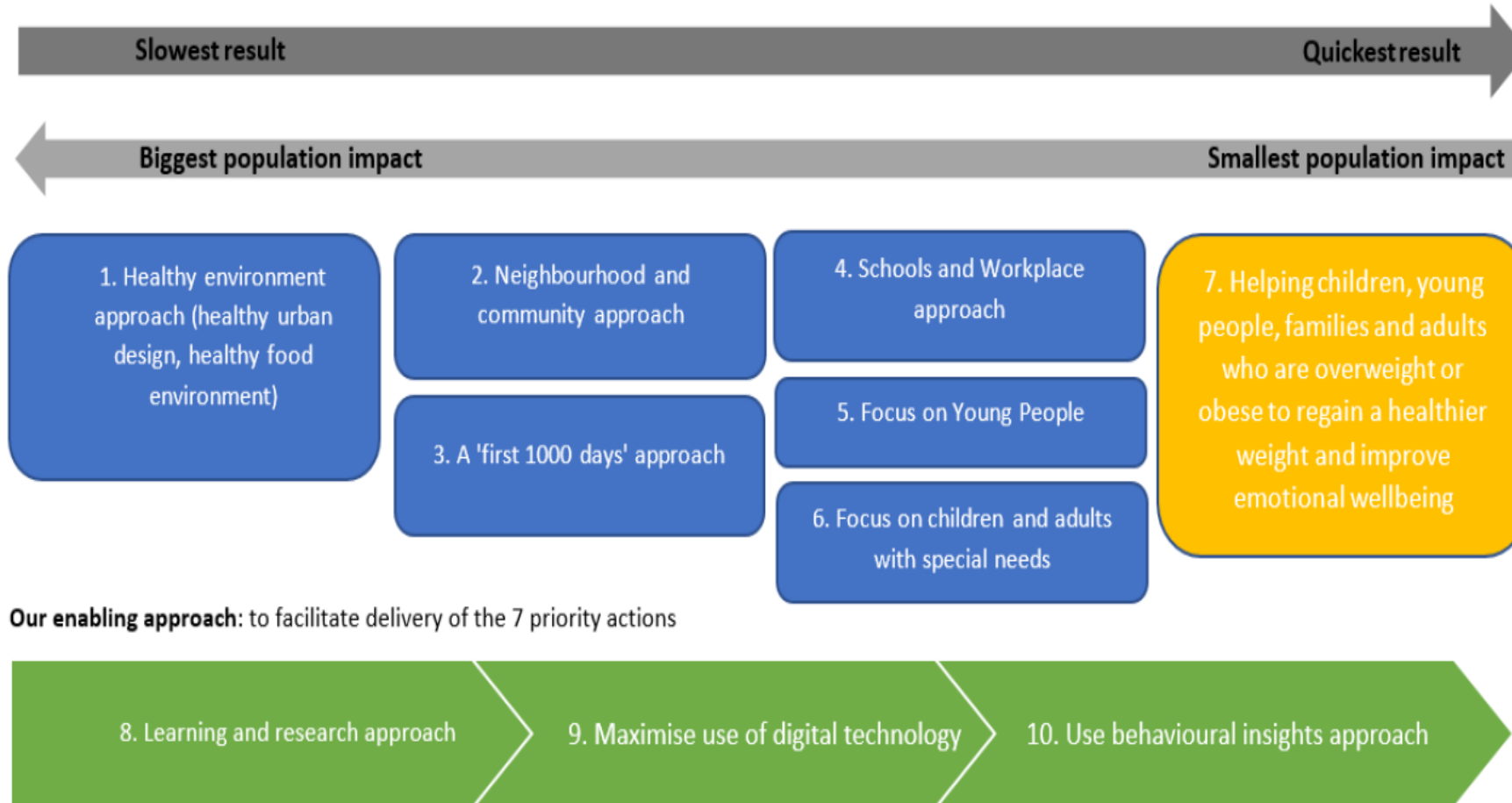


\*Academic year 2017 - 2018

# Hertfordshire Whole Systems Obesity Programme

- Project team recruited for the WSO programme
- Mapping of local factors conducted
- Developing understanding of gaps and opportunities to address obesity
- Draw on the Ten Pillars of Action approach

# Hertfordshire: Ten Pillars Approach



# Community engagement and the co-production of solutions

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## Consultation methods and participants

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- 56 young people (26 male, 30 female) participated in August 2019
- Recruited via the NCS / Stevenage Football Club



# Consultation methods and participants

- Visit 1
  - Mapping activity
  - Discussion
  - Suggestion box
- Visit 2 – small group discussion
  - (1) What does overweight mean to you?
  - (2) What words should we use when talking about overweight or obesity?
  - (3) Why are some people overweight and not others?
  - (4) What are the impacts of overweight/obesity?

# Growing up in Stevenage

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Four main themes identified as important:

- Affordability
- Crime and anti-social behaviour
- Transport
- Places to go and places to eat



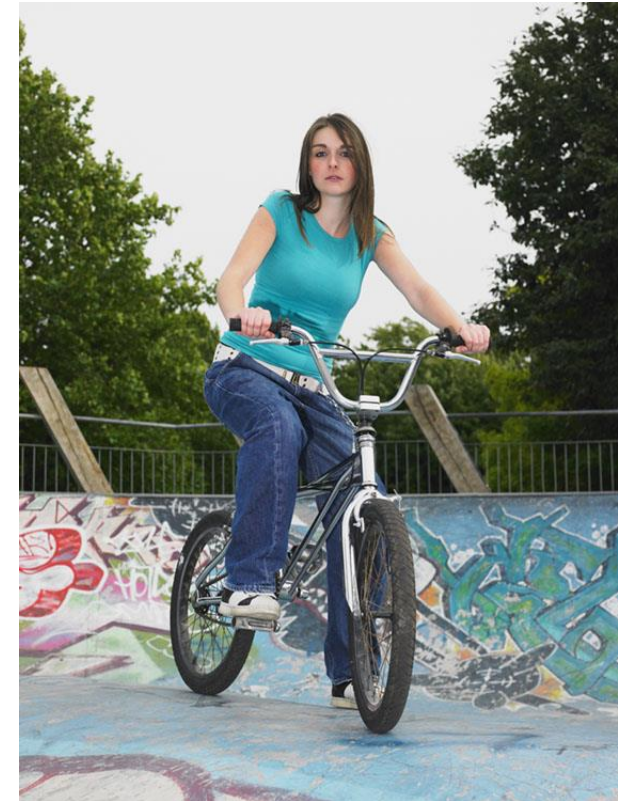
# Factors driving excess weight/obesity

- What does overweight mean to you?
- What words should we use when talking about overweight or obesity?



# Factors driving excess weight/obesity

- Why are some people overweight and not others?
- What are the impacts of overweight/obesity?



# Local Issues Related to Overweight /Obesity

- Affordability:
  - The cost of healthy vs less healthy food
  - The cost of gym membership and other physical activities
  - The cost of using public transport
- Crime and anti-social behaviour
  - Bullying
  - Fear of gangs and knife crime
    - Both impact autonomy, freedom to be outside, lower levels of physical activity

# Local Issues Related to Overweight /Obesity

- Transport
  - Cycle path network viewed positively
  - Public transport viewed as unreliable [encourage car use]
- Places to go and places to eat
  - Few places to go/socialise for older teenagers
  - This influences use of fast food restaurants



# What solutions do young people suggest?

- **1. Healthy Environment Approach**

- More pathways and cycle lanes.
- Ban cars in the town centre.
- Remove advertisements for fast food restaurants on bus tickets and replace with adverts for healthy food, for example free fruit.
- Increased and improved police patrols to prevent bikes from being stolen.
- Increased street lighting, especially in the winter months.
- Reduce the cost of healthy food such as fruit and vegetables/ Increase the cost of unhealthy food.
- Decrease the number of fast food and takeaway outlets. Increase the number of healthy food outlets to give people viable alternatives, like fruit and vegetable markets.
- Regulations so that shops have to relocate healthier foods to the front of shops or by the tills.
- Regulations to change the way food is cooked in fast food restaurants; baked instead of fried.
- Regulations to stop the advertisement of unhealthy and/or fast food.
- Provide free fruit. Fast food outlets could offer free fruit bags.
- Make public images about obesity more graphic, similar to cigarette packaging.



# What solutions do young people suggest?

- **2. Neighbourhood and Community Approach**

- Areas for young people to socialise where gangs or knife crime will not be an issue.
- Encourage people to walk or cycle, rather than driving, e.g. via a financial incentive.
- Build an athletics track for young people to use that is free or cheap.
- Provide affordable gym equipment people can use at home.
- Increase the advertisement of local sports activities, clubs and events.
- Make gyms more accessible by building them in residential areas.
- Increase the number of local sports activities available for young people, for example a rock climbing club.
- Build more skate parks for young people.
- Organise fun runs for charity.
- Make sports activities and clubs more affordable for young people and their families.

# What solutions do young people suggest?

- **4. Schools and Workplace Approach**
- Teach young people about respecting others, in particular those who are overweight or obese.
- Raise awareness about healthy foods and diets by educating people about food.
- Raise awareness about obesity in schools.
- Promote sports in schools. All schools should encourage students to participate in sports. Secondary schools could make PE compulsory for all students.
- **5. Focus on Young People**
- Events about obesity that are specifically targeted at young people.
- Decrease the cost of public transport for young people to discourage the use of cars.
- Encourage young people to be physically active and engage in sports outside for school by reducing the cost of gym memberships and sports facilities or activities for young people.
- Introduce more programs like NCS for young people
- Increase the number of healthy food outlets that are affordable for young people

- Project funded by the NIHR ARC East of England
- With thanks to Stevenage Football club and all the young people who generously gave their time
- Report available on the ARC EoE website:  
[https://arc-  
eoe.nihr.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Childhood%20obesity%20in%20Stevenage%20report.pdf](https://arc-<br/>eoe.nihr.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Childhood%20obesity%20in%20Stevenage%20report.pdf)



*Thank you for listening.*