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Clinical Commissioning Group

# **BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT HEALTHY WEIGHT DECLARATION:**

## **An Evaluation**



October 2019

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## 1.0 SUMMARY

The Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight (Declaration) enables local authorities to review their policies and consider how these may impact on healthy weight; it draws attention to the problems caused by overweight and obesity; it helps the council both to take leadership but also to challenge partner organisations to play their own role in addressing healthy weight.

The Declaration was originally designed by the North West based healthy weight campaign, Food Active in consultation with expert stakeholder, including Directors of Public

Health, local authority officers, academics and partner organisations.

This evaluation report of the Blackburn with Darwen Declaration was requested in order to assess progress. It contains a background to the Declaration and the steps Blackburn with Darwen Council and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) took for it to be adopted. Ten senior council officers and members were interviewed for their insight and comments.

The report is authored by Alex Holt of Food Active.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

Food Active is a regional healthy weight campaign commissioned by local authorities in the North West including Blackburn with Darwen Council. The programme was initiated in 2012 as a collaborative commitment by Directors of Public Health to address obesity, following the launch of the Government White Paper 'Healthy Weight Healthy Lives'. The Food Active brand was launched in November 2013 using a website, e-bulletin and social media and is now well known both nationally and internationally.

Food Active has proposed the development of a Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight as a means for local government to take a 'whole systems' policy-based to addressing obesity. Blackpool Council was the first to adopt such a Declaration in January 2016 with three other North West councils following in the next twelve months (St Helens, Knowsley and Lancashire). Blackburn with Darwen were the first council to jointly sign with their CCG (13<sup>th</sup> April 2017). To date (October 2019) 19 councils have signed the Declaration.

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## 3.0 BACKGROUND TO THE FOOD ACTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECLARATION ON HEALTHY WEIGHT

Food Active aims to add value locally by tackling obesity through a collaborative approach, with a specific focus on population level policies that will help reduce excess weight. In August 2014, Food Active organised and hosted a meeting with expert stakeholders to initiate discussions on the principles of drafting a local authority commitment to address obesity. The rationale for developing such a document is based on the Local Authority Declaration on Tobacco Control. The event informed initial discussions on the focus, priorities for action and overarching vision for

the policy tool, to consider engagement and support within local authorities and a process for its development and possible timescale. Further workshops were then delivered across the region with key stakeholders in three local authorities. The objectives were to consider the proposed content and local variation in relation to priorities and issues affecting policy development and decision making, engagement with key council members and national and local endorsement. These events resulted in the development of a draft declaration in 2015.



Street in Blackburn depicting the unhealthy food environment

## 4.0 THE BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN COUNCIL AND CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP DECLARATION ON HEALTHY WEIGHT

The Declaration was launched as part of the Eat Well, Move More, Shape Up Strategy to provide strategic leadership to the healthy weight agenda. Overweight and obesity levels in Blackburn with Darwen (as of 2017/18 results) are:

Overweight (including obesity): 23.6% in reception, 34.6% in year 6 and 61.9% for adults. The reception and year 6 figures for Blackburn with Darwen are higher than the England average (22.4% for reception; 34.3% for year 6), but lower than the North West average (23.9% for reception; 35.5% for year 6). The figure for adults in Blackburn with Darwen is very slightly lower than both the England (62.0%) and North West average (64.3%).

Blackburn with Darwen's Eat Well, Move More, Shape Up Strategy is structured around access to affordable, healthy and good quality food; increasing opportunities to be physically active; and health promoting environments, the aims include:

### Eat Well Aims

- Promote healthy and sustainable food choices for all
- Tackle food poverty and diet related ill-health across the life course
- Build community food knowledge, skills and resources
- Promote a vibrant diverse local food economy
- Transform catering and food procurement
- Reduce waste and the ecological footprint of the food system



### Move More Aims

- Active society: creating a social movement where physical activity is a priority for everyone
- Moving professionals: activating networks to create active healthy workplaces and make every contact count to promote physical activity
- Active environments: creating the right spaces for safe and enjoyable physical activity
- Moving at scale: maximising the potential of the existing assets and build on existing evidence base on what works to make us active



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## Shape Up Aims

- Transforming the environment we live in
- Making healthier choices easier by educating and empowering individuals and communities
- Giving all children the best start and tackling the generational issue of healthy weight in families
- Ensuring holistic and integrated evidence-based support for individuals with weight related conditions – either under or overweight



Children eating lunch, St. Gabriel's Primary School

The Blackburn with Darwen Declaration includes two sections. The first is a series of 14 generic statements developed by Food Active, and in consultation with the steering group, concerning the impact of overweight and obesity and includes commitments to protect the well-being of staff and citizens. The second part includes 10 commitments agreed by Blackburn with Darwen Council to meet its local needs. This is the same approach taken by the majority of the councils who have adopted similar Declarations in England. The text of Blackburn with Darwen's local commitments is contained in full in Appendix 2.

Signing the Declaration on Healthy Weight in Blackburn with Darwen meant the council made a formal and public commitment to support employees and the residents of Blackburn with Darwen to tackle the issue of obesity by encouraging individuals to make healthy choices. It was signed formally by Cllr Mohammed Khan M.B.E., Leader of the Council; Cllr Mustafa Desai, Executive Member for Health and Adult Social Care; Dominic Harrison, Director of Public Health.



Signatories of Blackburn with Darwen's Healthy Weight Declaration.

## 5.0 METHODS OF EVALUATION

In addition to having access to both internal and publicly available Blackburn with Darwen Council briefing documents and presentations, interviews were carried out with ten key respondents in senior roles within Blackburn with Darwen Council including four Elected Members. They were asked the same seven questions (see Appendix 3) and asked if there was anything that they wanted to add at the conclusion of the interview.

The interviews were either recorded on an audio device and notes taken as back up or completed electronically by the participant, if an interview was not possible. A transcribed version of each interview was sent to the participant for verification. The respondents can all be identified (see Appendix 1) but given it is the roles they play in relation to the Declaration that are important, they are referred to below as follows:

DPH	Director of Public Health
PHDM	Public Health Development Manager
CCG	CCG Clinical Lead
CPH	Consultant in Public Health
EMCYP	Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education
EMDCS	Executive Member for Digital and Customer Services
EMCL	Leader of the Council
EMAHW	Assistant Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing
PSDM	Planning Strategy and Development Manager
STP	Senior Transport Planner

## 6.0 FINDINGS

The transcribed quotes have been themed under each of the question headings. Quotes from all ten of the participants appear in the findings below, some have more quotes than others due to the level of detail in the interview. Please note not all issues raised by interviewees have been included in this report, some text has been issued for reasons of brevity.

### 6.1 OBESITY IN BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN

All saw obesity as an important issue and were clear that obesity needed to be addressed.

- CCG: "Yes, as a GP I see lots of patients with weight problems, and this directly and indirectly contributes to a lot of ill health".
- STP: "With recent figures indicating that one in four adults in Blackburn with Darwen are classified as obese and with 1.5% classified as severely obese I would, yes feel that obesity is a problem within the Borough"
- CPH: "Yes for me absolutely, obesity is a local problem for us"

Links between obesity and deprivation/poverty.

- EMCL: "Yes, it is a problem, particularly amongst the more deprived".
- EMDCS: "Obesity is a problem, we have known for a number of years, in terms of where the town sits in the terms of demographics, in terms of poverty, it is a constant problem that we are trying to address
- PHDM: "Both adult and childhood obesity levels in Blackburn with Darwen are similar to the national average. However, the main issue in Blackburn with Darwen is the Level of obesity within our most deprived wards. Our most deprived wards also see an increase in poor dental health, disproportionate numbers of hot food takeaways and poor access to green space".

There was acknowledgement that underweight is an issue in Blackburn with Darwen.

- EMCYP: "I think healthy weight overall is a problem. It is both a problem in terms of overweight and obesity but also underweight.
- DPH: "We are not surprising amongst the very worst in the country [for obesity] given our level of poverty and given that obesity is linked to poverty. I think one of the reasons for that, for us, is that we have 30% south Asian population who certainly in the younger years tend to weigh less, in fact we have a related but opposite problem which is relatively high percentage of low weight children. Of course, those things can be related, but in our case, we think some of it is related to ethnicity."



## 6.2 ROLES IN PROMOTING HEALTHY WEIGHT IN BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN

Ensuring healthy weight is discussed and taken seriously:

CPH: “My role is trying to explain that it is not just about taking a population approach, it’s not just what services we commission and care pathways we have for treating weight issues, it is about a whole system change...it is partnership working and raising awareness that slight changes to policies and practice in various sectors could influence overall outcomes of obesity prevalence”.

Making sure change happens:

EMCL: “I am responsible as leader of the council for the action plan, to make sure we are monitoring the whole process, to make sure the strategy is implemented in our policies and practice in the local authority”

DPH: “As a Director of Public Health of course, my role is to make sure the system is working to produce the maximum number of the population in the healthiest weight possible...I think one of the things we are increasingly realising is that we cannot screen, case-find or treat our way out of obesity, because the percentage of the population with that problem is getting bigger every year”.

PHDM: “I support the council, CCG and other settings in ensuring healthy weight is a priority in all policies and daily practice”.

Understanding all council services have a role to play in addressing unhealthy weight:

STP: “I see my role as more of a supportive role in promoting healthy weight in Blackburn with Darwen through the Connecting East Lancashire Programme (CEL). CEL encourages people to be more active through walking and cycling schemes.

PSDM: “My role is to ensure Blackburn with Darwen’s strategic framework supports and highlights the promotion of healthy weight wherever possible”.

It is about promoting prevention as key:

CCG: “As a GP I am a still a strong supporter of family medicine and influencing families to make the right choices...but I also work with the CCG in a more strategic direction trying to get patients away from medical care and looking at self-management, self-care, and promoting healthy weight and healthy lifestyles”.

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Understanding the role of elected members:

EMDCS: “I feel every elected member has a role to play in terms of the uptake and belief around the strategy and actually delivering the messages to inform local residents and the local population on the importance of healthy weight”.

EMCYP: “In my role supporting children and families, it is about the right start for children”.



Dr Penny Morris, Medical Director, BwD CCG presenting at the Healthy Weight Summit, March 19.

## 6.3 ROLES IN SUPPORTING BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN COUNCIL TO ADOPT THE DECLARATION

Role of public health to drive this agenda forward:

PHDM: “I successfully advocated for the adoption of the declaration with senior leaders from both the council and the CCG”.

DPH: “My role as DPH and our role as a public health department was to lead our key stakeholders in signing up – those stakeholders being the CCG and the local authority”.

Communication was key:

EMCL: “I was to make sure the departments within the council were fully on board to implement this policy and to make sure that all elected members are very much aware of what work we are trying to do, and then they can raise awareness in their own local area.

CPH: “I ensured the agenda continued, that we continued to have regular strategic meetings, continuing to ensure the whole council recognised that they had a role to play”.

System leader support:

EMAHW: "As an elected member I had to support the officer's recommendations (or not), which I did whole-heartedly.

EMDCS: "I inputted into the debate and actually supported the executive member and the offices who were bringing this forward".

## 6.4 HAS THE DECLARATION HELPED TO ADDRESS UNHEALTHY WEIGHT?

It has helped to generate opportunities:

EMAHW: "It has helped to influence the things we are working on now...Recipe for Health, Obesity Trailblazer, food poverty, working with public and private sector".

DPH: "I think one of the areas where I could say it has been particularly helpful is that we are now, on the basis of the work done on the declaration and our wider strategic work we have put in bids for, and have been successful in a being a child obesity trailblazer in a recent national programme".

CPH: "We are committed, we have a strategy, we have a declaration and I think that really strengthens our funding applications, so when funders look at us, we do look like we have actually done the leg work, this project is more likely to succeed because we have got those strong partnerships".

Demonstrates a real commitment:

STP: "It is valuable in having such a supporting document that shows commitment to improving health and wellbeing of the local population...this in turn completely supports the work we are delivering through the CEL project".

EMDCS: "Having [a declaration] there reminds us that yes we have the issue and we have a duty of care to deliver our strategies to address the issues that we set out to do".

Ensures policies and practice support healthy weight:

PSDM: "It's helped to raise awareness of the issue when assessing planning applications for developments which may affect eating behaviours of residents".

PHDM: "I think people genuinely do not have healthy weight on their radar or consider it an issue when considering policy, service development and embedded daily practice and the Declaration can help to start those sometimes difficult conversations".

EMCYP "Policies we have adopted around advertising, what we do what we don't do. Trying to get businesses to think more healthily".

## 6.5 HAS ADOPTING THE DECLARATION CAUSED ANY DIFFICULTIES?

The general consensus was that the declaration has not caused difficulties for respondents in their roles:

- DPH: "No, we see it very much as an asset and as a very useful tool in mobilising political and organisational support for a set of objectives which should be self-evident but often aren't".
- EMAHW: "Not at all. It is encouraging more than putting obstacles in our way".
- CPH: "We have had some interesting conversations but I would say it was good to have those conversations, so they were actually opportunities".

But there was reference to the fact there were challenges

- EMDCS: "It is not an easy issue to resolve overnight, it is a long game, it is not easy to change people's behaviour, it has challenges and we are working extremely hard to tackle those challenges".
- EMCYP: "For a lot of people, they think that we don't understand the pressures of life for them, so where we have got parents who have to work because of the system, it is easier to buy a take away meal or a pre-cooked meal from a supermarket than make it from scratch, because people are busy and they take the simple option which is not always the healthy option".
- PHDM: "There is also a challenge around 'health vs wealth' where economic regeneration and the pressure on the Council to create revenue from advertising and high-profile events such as the Festival of Making. There is no easy answer to this and will be an ongoing piece of work".
- CPH: "We also had a discussion about workplace health which has been quite challenging, so I think we are sometimes seen as the 'food police' or the 'health police'".

And maintaining momentum was seen as key:

EMCL: "The only difficulty I have found was raising the awareness and maintaining momentum".

PHDM: "The difficulty has been maintaining momentum and raising awareness of the Declaration and its commitments".

Healthy weight is everybody's business:

CPH: "Raising awareness of what it means to sign up to the healthy weight declaration, means that everybody has to understand it is about health promoting environments, health promoting settings, and it feeds into workplace health as well, so people need to think before promoting their event, or activity that it does fit, it is a consistent message that we are promoting".

## 6.6 WHAT STEPS CAN BE TAKEN TO ADDRESS UNHEALTHY WEIGHT IN BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN

Working with communities, with elected members:

EMCL: "Engaging with the community, engaging with elected members....changing behaviour and attitude and culture of the community and individual".

PHDM: "Engaging all elected members in the healthy weight discussion and support them to advocate for healthy weight in their communities".

DPH: "One of our biggest underutilised capacities is the commitment, enthusiasm and continued engagement of our elected members. I think signing the healthy weight declaration is a key strategy to enabling elected members to become engaged at a political level in some of the challenges involved in reducing obesogenic environments".

DPH: "Create a social movement for health".

Around education:

EMDCS: "Education – helping people to understand the effect of a choice they are making".



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## Early intervention:

EMCYP: "For me it is about starting as early as possible".

CPH: "Recognising children and young people, so starting at a very early age, or even pre-conception with a focus on population health and wellbeing but actually so we don't lose the focus on the family approach and we don't lose the focus and just think about adults and treatment of obesity, we do think about primary prevention as a key policy and strategy".

## Review current practice:

PHDM: "Review all policies and ensure healthy weight features in every policy".

PHDM: "Review all communication and marketing activity from the council to ensure consistent messages which affect healthy weight are given out to council staff and residents".

CPH: "Workplace health and staff culture change [within the Council].

CPH: "Look at policies and strategies to ensure we are creating health promoting environments, not contradicting".

DPH: "To be constantly vigilant about what opportunities there are through existing powers of inspection, of regulation, and of planning to control the proliferation of unhealthy hot food outlets in places".

CCG: "With the reconfiguration of services around networks and working more as integrated teams, I think both council and health services, although we have a brilliant connection already, it could be better".

## Work as a whole system:

STP: "To ensure the approach to tackling obesity is a whole system approach across all council departments, ensuring everyone understands the importance and the role they have to play".



Physical activity at Blackburn Central High School

## 6.7 HOW SHOULD THE DECLARATION BE TAKEN FORWARD?

To a certain extent this has been covered previously, keeping momentum going is key, as is engaging with Elected Members and all council departments.

Also using it to look for further opportunities:

EMAHW: "I think the obesity trailblazer is a big, big thing for us and I think it will help us to identify what will work and what isn't working".

Ensuring everyone is aware of the role they have to play:

SPT: "In my opinion it is vitally important that as a council we all understand what the healthy weight declaration is, the role that we play with the work that we do and how we work together to tackle the obesity issue".

Consistent messages:

CCG: "A joint push...so we are all singing from the same hymn sheet, just get this message out that there are ways of getting to a healthier weight, that there is help out there, not just for residents, but for practitioners, for workers, for social workers, for doctors and nurses to make better use of existing resources so we are all sending the right message out, sometimes the message isn't always clear and sometimes it is a little bit confused".

EMCL: "Reviewing our communication system and marketing strategy, and to send a consistent message to residents and staff members of the council".



Seema Kennedy MP and Leader of the Council, Cllr Mohammed Chan OBE visiting a hot food take-away, to celebrate Pennine Lancashire being selected as a childhood obesity trailblazer.

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Continually monitor and review:

EMDCS: “We have to continually monitor ourselves and assess the impact of the strategies we have implemented – are they really having an impact on people’s weight, on childhood obesity? It is about making those decisions, implementing them, reviewing effectiveness and continually tweaking to improve, then we will end up with a robust strategy to improve people’s lives”.

DPH: “We need the whole system to sign up, and that means national government and national government departments who create policy and provide the context for healthy or unhealthy food supplies”.

CPH: “In Blackburn we do have the joint declaration and I think that was a really great move to link with the CCG and the local authority, so place-based prevention. So, to take it on to the next steps we need to think about our other strategic partners in our patch”.

PHDM: “We will also maintain the engagement from partners and stakeholders who attended the Healthy Weight Summit in March to ‘grow’ the healthy weight movement into communities and settings across Blackburn with Darwen”.

PHDM: “Review and refresh the local commitments beyond 2020”.



Cllr Brian Turner hosting the Healthy Weight Summit, March 2019. Bringing partners together to strengthen action on healthy weight in the borough.

## 7.0 SUMMARY AND KEY LEARNING

Ten participants were interviewed for this evaluation exercise. Participants held a wide range of positions and roles, which provided the opportunity to understand views on both healthy weight in Blackburn with Darwen and the Declaration from a variety of perspectives.

- Obesity is considered an issue in Blackburn with Darwen
- All participants felt that they had a role to play in addressing unhealthy weight in Blackburn with Darwen
- Overall participants were very positive about the impact and the opportunities generated from the Declaration
- Participants felt it was key to ensure momentum continued to impact on healthy weight
- Participants felt a system-wide approach was very important
- Utilising Elected Members to drive the healthy weight agenda forwards was seen as important, and useful in engaging communities
- Partnerships were viewed as important – it was suggested that they need to think about other strategic partners across the patch
- Working with communities was flagged as important in driving the Declaration forwards
- Participants felt it was important to use the Declaration to continually revisit and review policies and practice
- It was seen as important to ensure that impact was continually monitored and evaluated
- Consistent messages were viewed as important
- It was suggested that a review and refresh the local commitments beyond 2020 should be considered

## 8.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the officers and members of Blackburn with Darwen Council who supported and participated in this evaluation. Thank you to Beth Wolfenden for coordinating the participants.

Thanks to Robin Ireland and Nicola Calder at the Health Equalities Group who led the development of the Local Government Declaration on Healthy Weight.

Thank you to Beth Bradshaw at the Health Equalities Group for her support with the interviews and compiling the report.

## 9.0 APPENDICIES

### APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEWEES FOR EVALUATION REPORT

DPH	Professor Dominic Harrison	Director of Public Health
PHDM	Beth Wolfenden	Public Health Development Manager
CCG	Dr John Randall	CCG Clinical Lead
CPH	Shirley Goodhew	Consultant in Public Health
EMCYP	Cllr Maureen Bateson	Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education
EMDCS	Cllr Quesir Mahmood	Exec Member for Digital and Customer Services
EMCL	Cllr Mohammed Khan OBE	Leader of the Council
EMAHW	Cllr Brian Taylor	Assistant Exeutive Member for Health and Wellbeing
PSDM	Helen Holland	Planning Strategy and Development Manager
STP	Melanie Taylor	Senior Transport Planner

### APPENDIX 2: LOCAL COMMITMENTS FROM BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN'S DECLARATION, AS ADPOTED IN MARCH 2017

- > Support the introduction of 'Mile a Day' and 'Couch to 5k' in primary and secondary schools respectively
- > Support Early Years settings to enable a structured physical activity offer and healthy food policy
- > Develop a Food Poverty Network to reduce food poverty and tackle malnutrition in all settings
- > Support the introduction of school food policies including lunchbox policies
- > To be a designated Sugar Smart Town
- > Develop a Food Charter for the Borough to promote healthy and sustainable food in a local economy
- > Promote Active Travel and use of Rights of Way across the Borough to increase physical activity, for social and employment opportunities and minimise air pollution
- > Support 'Street Play' initiatives through exploring the implementation of periodic temporary street closure orders and other innovative sites for play
- > To be a designated Breastfeeding Friendly Town
- > To achieve Sustainable Food Town status



## **APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONS USED FOR THIS EVALUATION**

Q1: Do you feel obesity is a particular problem in Blackburn with Darwen?

Q2: How do you see your role in promoting healthy weight in Blackburn with Darwen?

Q3: What role (if any) did you play in the adoption of the Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight by Blackburn with Darwen Council?

Q4: Has the Declaration helped you (and/or the Council) to address healthy weight in Blackburn with Darwen? If so, what influence do you feel it has had?

Q5: Has adopting the Declaration caused any difficulties either for you in your role or for the Council?

Q6: Can you identify what you feel may be the three most important steps that the Council may be able to take in tackling obesity in Blackburn with Darwen?

Q7: What do you think may be the best way of taking the Local Authority Declaration on Healthy Weight forward?

That concludes my questions. Is there anything else about the Local Authority Declaration that you would like to add?

This support pack has been prepared by:

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