

Spotlight Public Health

Evidence and policy briefings

Why Weight? Pledge for creating Healthier places Together

December 2025

Purpose

Spotlight briefings summarise the key information that decision makers need to keep up to speed on important health issues. Each briefing puts the science, national policy and guidance into a local context to support local decisions.

Briefings are shared with a wide range of partners including South Gloucestershire Health & Wellbeing Board, Elected Members, Council staff, and members of the Locality Partnership. Please share with others who would find it helpful.

If you would like to be added to the mailing list for these briefings please email:
publichealthsouthgloucestershire@southglos.gov.uk

Spotlight: Healthy weight

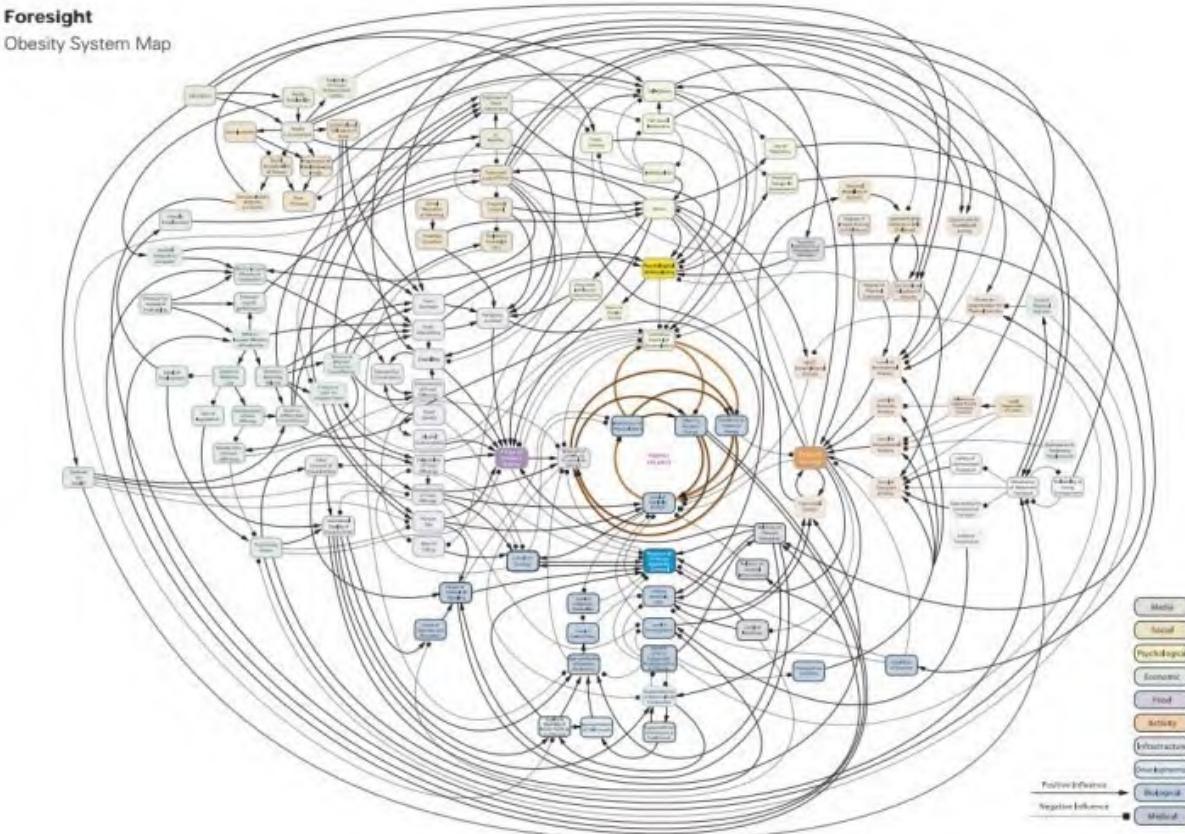
- In the 2024 – 2028 Council Plan, South Gloucestershire Council committed to delivering a Healthy Weight Declaration, and the Why Weight? Pledge forms that approach
- The BNSSG Integrated Care System (ICS) committed in their Joint Forward Plan to develop and deliver a whole-system approach to healthy weight
- Healthy weight is also an area of focus in the 2025-2029 South Glos Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy



Source: [ICS Strategy, 2024-2029 & South Gloucestershire Council Plan, 2024-2028 & South Gloucestershire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025-29](#)

Why does it matter? (1)

- Being above a healthy weight is the leading risk factor for preventable poor health across the local population and a major driver of **health inequalities**
- People living in our most deprived areas have less access to the conditions needed to lead a healthier life. This drives higher rates of obesity and widens health inequalities
- The cause of obesity goes way beyond what an individual chooses to eat and can be influenced by a wide range of other factors including environmental, biological, genetic, economic and social factors e.g. access to healthy food, green space, education, and financial security



Why does it matter? (2)

- Maintaining good health extends beyond body weight e.g. blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose control also strongly influences risk of cardiovascular disease
- Weight stigma, bias, and discrimination increases the risk of psychological distress, disordered eating, and avoidance of healthcare or physical activity
- These experiences reinforce poor health outcomes and create structural barriers to care
- Weight stigma may increase the link between higher body weight and poor health through chronic stress, weight cycling, and reduced healthcare engagement
- A shift away from weight-centric approaches toward holistic, compassionate, and evidence-based care is needed to reduce inequalities

A 'whole systems' approach

- No one singular intervention, or one singular organisation can make an impact alone
- Instead, action is required across the 'whole system'
- BNSSG is the first Integrated Care System (ICS) to develop a system-wide healthy weight pledge



A bicycle is a system made up of many separate parts



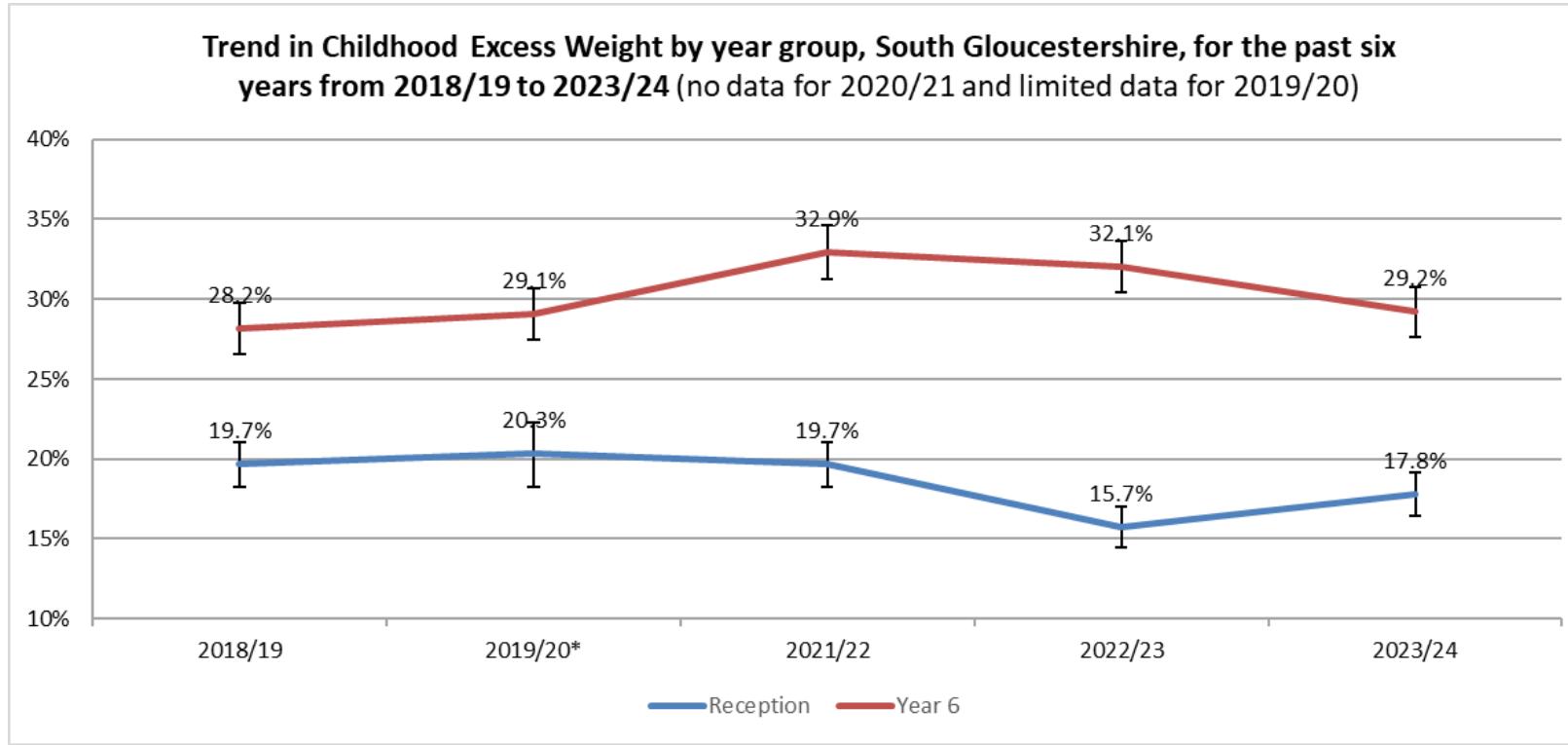
No single part operates the system alone



The bicycle can only be ridden when all parts work together

The function of the system is different from the sum of the parts

South Gloucestershire context: children



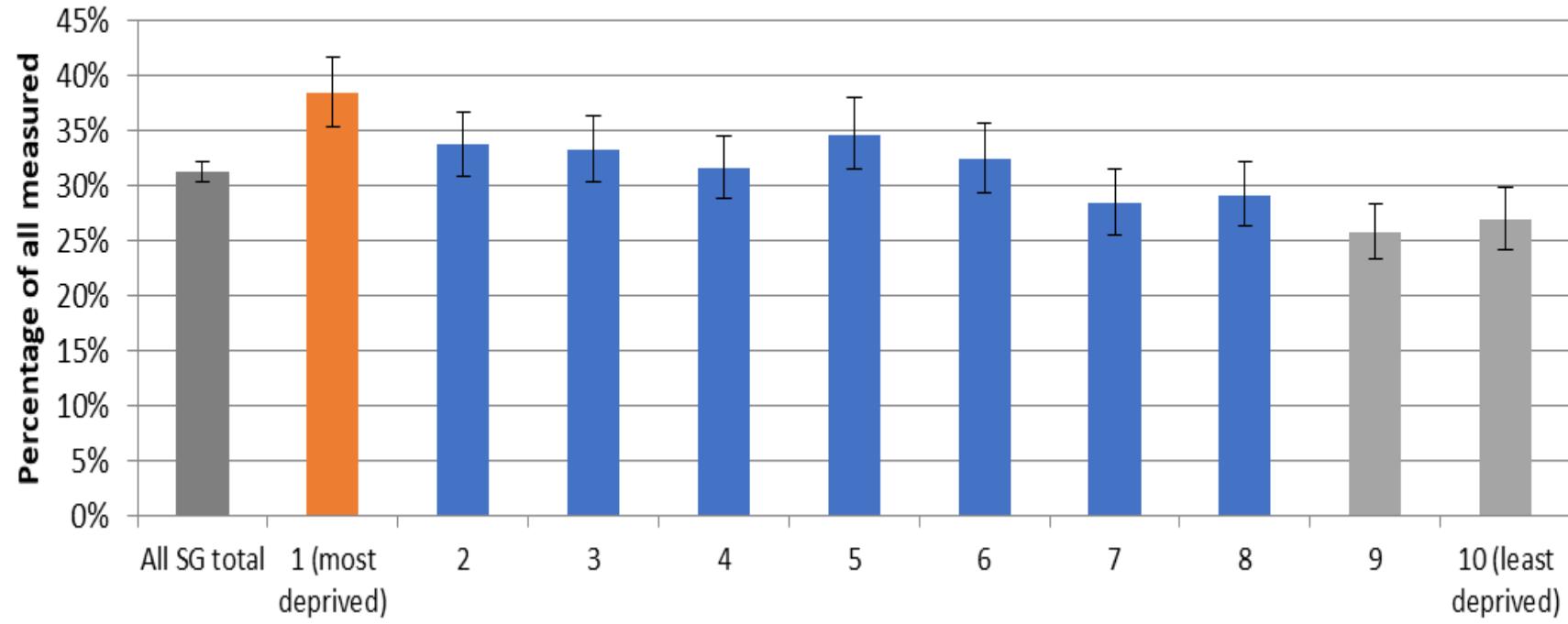
The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) is a mandatory function of Local Authorities and has collected robust and reliable data for many years. In South Gloucestershire, School Nursing Services are commissioned to measure the height and weight of children in reception and year 6 in all state funded infant, primary and junior schools.

In reception, the trend in excess weight remained steady between 2018/19 (19.7%) to 2021/22 (19.7%), however in 2022/23 there was a decrease to 15.7% but prevalence has risen to 17.8% in 2023/24.

In year 6, there is an increase between 2018/19 and 2021/22 of 4.7%, with strong evidence that these years are statistically different. The prevalence of 32.1% in 2022/23 is amongst the highest ever recorded in South Gloucestershire. However, prevalence has decreased to 29.2% in 2023/24.

South Gloucestershire context: children

Obesity and overweight of Year 6 pupils by local deprivation decile, South Gloucestershire
Residents, 2021/22, 2022/23 & 2023/24 pooled



The NCMP data for Reception and Year 6 also shows how excess weight in children varies by area deprivation. Children in the most deprived parts of South Gloucestershire are more likely to have excess weight, while those in the least deprived areas have lower rates than the South Gloucestershire average.

South Gloucestershire context: adults

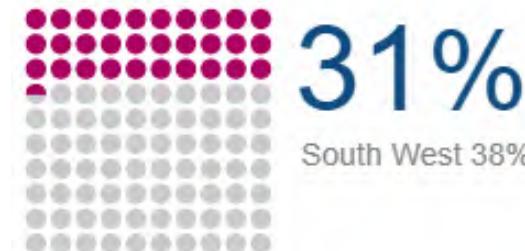


of adults are classified as overweight or obese, which is similar to the South West region and England. In England, a higher proportion of men than women are overweight and obese, but women are less physically active (1,2).

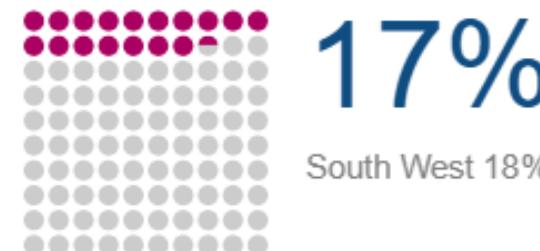
Percentage of physically active adults 
2023/24



Percentage of adults meeting the '5-a-day' fruit and vegetable consumption rec...
2023/24 



Percentage of adults walking for travel at least three days per week 
2022/23



Local action: Why Weight? Pledge for creating Healthier places Together

The Why Weight? Pledge has been developed by partners of the Healthier Together Integrated Care System (ICS) as a commitment to create an environment where everyone in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire has the **access and ability to eat well, feel well and be active and raise awareness of and seek to tackle weight stigma.**



Why Weight?

The name of the Pledge is intended to spark conversations and encourage a more inclusive approach.

‘Why Weight’ is a play on words that acknowledges the need to take action to improve the health of our population and seeks to move away from a weight-focused discourse, to one that is focused on creating health gains.

The focus of the Why Weight? Pledge

- We recognise that the relationship between weight and health is **very complex** and that for individuals we cannot make assumptions about someone's health based solely on their body weight or BMI
- When we talk about healthy weight, we are talking about all the factors that enable people to live a healthy life and maintain a weight that is **healthy for them**

The pledge seeks to:

- Address the wider determinants of weight in a place-based approach
- Highlight the need to tackle inequalities
- Take a population level approach
- Reduce weight stigma
- Take a trauma-informed lens

Contents of the Pledge

The pledge has ten strategic commitments for each signatory organisation, which are split across five themes:



1. Provide strategic leadership to implement the Pledge
2. Work in partnership across the whole system
3. Take action against weight stigma
4. Contribute to workforce development around weight stigma and trauma-informed approaches
5. Focus on health gains rather than weight loss
6. Improve the food and drink environment
7. Create healthier built environments
8. Ensure access to nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate food
9. Work with communities
10. Share learning and best practice across the system

Where are we now in South Gloucestershire?

- Following endorsement of the Why Weight? Pledge by the BNSSG Integrated Care Partnership Board in February 2025, all partners within the BNSSG ICS were invited to sign the Pledge.
- In May 2025, SG HWBB members agreed to endorse the Pledge and encourage all member organisations to sign up by 1 Sept 2025. They also agreed to recognise healthy weight as a priority focus for 2025/26.
- South Gloucestershire Council signed the Pledge at Cabinet in June 2025 with cross party support.
- Within the Council, a Task & Finish Group was set up to coordinate early activity, map existing work, and identify local priorities. We have agreed three key actions for delivery in the first 12 months, and are now finalising an action plan.
- SG HWBB Member organisations have also signed the Pledge and will have their own action plans for implementation within their organisation.
- A BNSSG Community of Practice will be established in 2026 to support implementation of the Pledge which South Gloucestershire Council and other Health & Wellbeing Board members and system partners will be part of.



Next steps: South Gloucestershire Council actions

We have identified three draft actions for the first year of implementation. These align with the Pledge commitments and reflect key opportunities for South Gloucestershire Council -

1. Develop and launch a BNSSG system wide weight stigma awareness campaign and communications toolkit / guidance to improve staff knowledge and promote stigma-free, compassionate communication.
(pledge commitment 3 - take action against weight stigma)
2. Develop and deliver a workforce training offer on weight, food, oral health and physical activity for early years professionals and settings. In addition, champion and promote uptake of the BNSSG 'Why Weight? Changing the Narrative' eLearning module among staff and partners to build understanding of weight-related stigma and the wider determinants of health.
(pledge commitment 4 – workforce development)
3. Take a whole Council approach to creating opportunities for active lives and healthier food environments. This will include review of Council food environments and working with Environmental Health, Environment and Climate Change, Licensing and Planning colleagues to identify opportunities to ensure access to fresh, affordable, healthy food, well designed places and homes and promoting opportunities for food growing .
(pledge commitment 6 – improve food and drink environments)

BNSSG Community of Practice - emerging system priorities and areas for collaboration

A BNSSG Community of Practice will be established in 2026 to foster ongoing collaboration and partnership working across the system to deliver commitments in the Why Weight? Pledge and enable a culture of shared learning.

Emerging system priorities and areas for collaboration include:

- Workforce health and wellbeing
- Good Food Local benchmarking
- Workforce learning and development
- Planning healthy and sustainable meetings
- Infant Feeding
- Community engagement, insights and coproduction

How to get involved and support this work

Sign the Why Weight? Pledge for creating Healthier places Together - BNSSG Healthier Together:

- If your organisation is part of the Healthier Together ICS and has not already done so you can sign the pledge and agree actions to take forward within your organisation/strategic group and/or board

Help to reduce weight stigma:

- Complete the Why Weight? Changing the narrative around living with obesity e-module to build awareness of weight stigma and the wider determinants of health
- Encourage the use of non-stigmatising, person-first language when discussing weight, focus on creating healthier weight environments, actively challenge misconceptions that weight is a personal choice

Engage with local communities:

- Gather and share insights from residents to inform local Pledge actions

Champion the Pledge & healthier environments:

- Advocate and support a system wide prevention approach through the implementation of the Why Weight? Pledge

Further information

- [Food Active: Weight Stigma Resource Hub](#)
- [Local Government Association: Empowering Healthy Places](#)
- [OHID: Adult Obesity, Applying All Our Health](#)
- [OHID: Childhood Obesity, Applying All Our Health](#)
- [GOV.UK: Healthy Weight Environments, using the planning system to create healthy weight environments](#)
- [South Gloucestershire Healthy Weight Services](#)
- [Why Weight? Pledge for creating Healthier places Together - BNSSG Healthier Together](#)

Thank you

For any feedback or spotlight topic requests please contact:
publicheALTHsouthgloucestershire@southglos.gov.uk