

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Reducing the number of underweight children in Barnsley South Area

Purpose

Following a recent (25th October 2019) presentation by Diane Lee (Head of Public Health) to the South Area Council that focussed on public health data for the Borough and South Area specifically, it was identified that underweight children and food access in general were of particular concern to Members and that information on current provision and interventions to improve this needed to be explored. Consequently, this paper identifies several possible approaches, outlining the outcomes, costs, and any actions required of Members and the South Area Team. This paper will be accompanied by a short presentation delivered by the author of this paper at the next South Area Council meeting on 14th February 2020.

Context

The most recent published figures for underweight children show that Barnsley has significantly higher rates of underweight children (1.9%) at reception (age 4-5) compared to national and regional averages (1% and 0.9% respectively). This data is derived from the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) which measures the height and weight of over one-million children aged 4-5 and 10-11 years each year in primary schools in England. The data is used to monitor prevalence of underweight, healthy weight, overweight, obesity and severe obesity for children in Reception (age 4-5 years) and Year 6 (age 10-11 years).

Although this is concerning and action needs to be taken, it should be considered and understood that caveats apply. Firstly, 1.9% of the reception pupils being underweight in Barnsley equates to 51 children spread throughout the 77 primary schools and six areas across the Borough. Aggregated data across the last 5 years shows that across the South Area there have been 31 underweight children measured at reception and 35 at year 6, both of which are not significantly different to the Barnsley average. A further breakdown will be presented during the meeting on 14/02/20.

Secondly, there is the possibility that some children whose BMI falls into the underweight category either simply reflect a small build or are measured in the NCMP just before a growth spurt. These caveats do not justify the rates; rather they serve to add clarity to the scale of the problem.

It should also be noted that the prevalence of underweight children across year 6 (age 10-11) pupils in Barnsley is not statistically higher than regional and national averages. Moreover, levels of obesity remain a concern with 21.3% of reception pupils and 34.9% of year 6 pupils being overweight or obese. This emphasises the

importance of a healthy, balanced, portion-controlled diet to help children maintain a healthy weight and optimal health throughout their development.

Access to nutritious and diverse food is vitally important at all stages of life. Although the context above and possible approaches below are somewhat focussed on children, provision to improve food access generally will be considered and included below.

It is also worth mentioning that the Barnsley Good Food Steering Group met for the first time on 31.01.20. The steering group will inform the not for profit Good Food Barnsley Community Interest Company to continue the vision of building a better Barnsley where everyone has the right to the food they need to thrive. This steering group is made up of various organisations and individuals which advises the board on matters and engages stakeholders and partners. Public Health is represented in the group by Christus Ferneyhough. During this first meeting it was noted that FareShare Yorkshire (based in Wombwell) will soon be opening an industrial kitchen which may be suitable to host community cook and eat sessions amongst other events to improve food access. The steering group will meet again in March to agree initial priorities and progress actions.

Possible Approaches

Food Banks

What it is:	<p>Foodbanks in Barnsley offer emergency food to people in crisis. There are ten commissioned food banks in Barnsley, three of which are in South Area:</p> <p>WOMBELL (Mon 11:30-13:30) Salvation Army 21 Park St Wombwell S73 0HQ</p> <p>DARFIELD (Tues 09:30-10:30) Wesley Methodist Church Barnsley Road Darfield S73 9PB</p> <p>HOYLAND (Thurs 10:30-12:00) Central Street Hoyland Common Barnsley S74 0FG</p>
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How it works:	<p>To benefit from the food banks, people need to be referred to the service by a professional working with them (e.g. Health Visitor) that has identified that they need support from a food bank. The processes are summarised below;</p> <p>Food is donated</p> <p>Schools, churches, businesses and individuals donate non-perishable, in-date food to a foodbank. Large collections often take place as part of Harvest Festival celebrations and food is also collected at supermarkets.</p> <p>Food is sorted and stored</p> <p>Volunteers sort food to check that it's in date and pack it into boxes ready to be given to people in need.</p> <p>Professionals identify people in need</p> <p>Foodbanks partner with a wide range of care professionals such as doctors, health visitors, social workers and police to identify people in crisis and issue them with a voucher.</p> <p>Clients receive food</p> <p>Foodbank clients bring their voucher to a foodbank centre where it can be redeemed for (typically) three days' emergency food. Volunteers meet clients over a warm drink or free hot meal and can signpost people to agencies able to solve the longer-term problem (e.g. unemployment).</p>
Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients typically get 3 days' worth of nutritionally balanced food to feed their family • Clients can access help and support to resolve the underlying issue
Cost:	Donation (money or provision)
Action for members:	<p>Discourage the donation of infant formula to food banks and promote breastfeeding. this is due to concerns for the safety of the baby; there is an array of different products on the market and getting the right one from a food bank cannot be guaranteed</p> <p>Raise awareness on what foods people can donate and where to make donations</p>

Company Shop and Community Shop

<p>What it is:</p>	<p>Company Shop Company shop sells high quality branded food and household products, but at heavily discounted prices. Shoppers need to become a member and must be one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employees who work in the FMCG food supply chain. • NHS (including volunteers, students, GP Practices & NHS Dentists) • Police Officers (including special Police Officers) • Fire Service Staff • Those in receipt of a qualifying pension from the groups above <p>Wentworth 01226 747 121 Company Shop, Wentworth Way, Wentworth Industrial Estate, Tankersley, Barnsley, Yorkshire, S75 3DH</p> <p>Community Shop Company Shop funds Community Shops, which are for people who live in or around the area and are on means tested benefits (e.g. housing benefits).</p> <p>Shoppers gain access to high quality food, drink and household products from well-known brands at deeply discounted prices.</p> <p>The money made by the store helps to provide various services such as advice on debt, employment, and home budgeting</p> <p>Community shops also host community cook and eat sessions</p> <p>Goldthorpe 01709 892146 Community Shop Goldthorpe, 40-42 Barnsley Road, Goldthorpe, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S63 9NE</p> <p>Athersley 07900 646 168 Community Shop Athersley, Lindhurst Road, Athersley North, Barnsley, S71 3DQ</p>
<p>How it works:</p>	<p>Online application for Company Shop membership: https://www.companyshopgroup.co.uk/apply-for-membership/company-shop</p> <p>Community shop locations can be accessed by simply visiting or calling the nearest shop</p>
<p>Outcomes:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to good quality highly affordable food • Reduced food waste
<p>Cost:</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Action for members:</p>	<p>Raise awareness of the option, especially amongst those who work for public services</p>

Universal and means tested free school meals

What it is:	A free hot meal for pupils at school, 5 days per week.
How it works:	<p>All school children in reception, year 1 and year 2 are eligible for free school meals</p> <p>From year 3, a child will qualify for free school meals if they're in full-time education and the parents/guardians receive one of the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • income support • income based job seekers allowance • income related employment and support allowance • guarantee element of state pension credit • child tax credit with no working tax credit and have an income as assessed by the Inland Revenue that does not exceed £16,190 (subject to change annually) • support under Part 1V of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 • Universal Credit - if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you receive) <p>To access means-tested free school meals from year 3, a parent/guardian must complete an application form (https://barnsley-online.victoriaforms.com/Viewer-VicForms.asp?user=anon&Form=Free%20School%20Meals%20(1.0).wdf)</p> <p>Not all eligible parents/carers are taking up the offer of free school meals for their children. Only 18.3% of Barnsley primary school pupils are known to be eligible for and claiming free school meals.</p>
Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children have access to well-balanced nutritious meals at school • Improve concentration in lessons • Children don't go hungry at school • Parents/carers save money
Cost:	N/A
Action for members:	<p>Promote and raise awareness that pupils may be eligible for free school meals</p> <p>Provide information and encourage parents to check their eligibility</p> <p>Break down any stigma towards free school meals</p> <p>If a Councillor is a School Governor, use this influence to promote the above opportunities.</p>

Lunch Box Toolkit and Lunch Box Policy

<p>What it is:</p>	<p>The Lunch Box Toolkit is a free resource produced by Public Health to help parents ensure that their child's lunchbox contains a tasty, well-balanced meal to keep them focussed and ready to learn whilst maintaining healthy weight and overall health.</p> <p>The (draft) Lunch Box Policy is a more comprehensive guidance document that schools can adhere to and share with parents and guardians. There is increasing concern that many children are consuming too much sugar, fat and salt and too little fibre, fruit and vegetables. Packed lunches can contribute to almost a third of a child's weekly food intake and therefore need to be balanced and nutritious. The policy acts as the school's way of taking responsibility for improving children's health through ensuring that packed lunches brought in from home follow the policy guidance which is based on the government's School Food Standards.</p> <p>See Appendix 1 – Lunch Box Policy Appendix 2 Packed Lunch Poster</p>
<p>How it works:</p>	<p>The toolkit is visual and easy to understand. It provides information on recommended portions from each of the 4 main food groups and gives various examples and ideas of what to include and what to limit.</p> <p>The policy works by providing a list of responsibilities for the school, governors, parents and carers alongside guidance on what a packed lunch should and should not include. In addition, the policy provides guidance on communication and monitoring of policy adherence. For the policy to have maximum effect, it requires whole school approach, with full support on all fronts.</p>
<p>Outcomes:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All pupils who bring a packed lunch will be equally nourished as those who have a school meal. Packed lunches face the same scrutiny and receive the same guidance as school catered lunches • Staff, parents/carers, and pupils will be educated on the importance of good nutrition
<p>Cost:</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Action for members:</p>	<p>Engage with schools and encourage headmasters to implement the policy Identify a school in the South area that may be willing to pilot the policy or to simply consult with for feedback and suggestions</p>

Magic Breakfast (and other breakfast clubs)

<p>What it is:</p>	<p>Magic Breakfast, funded through funds from the sugar tax, is a registered charity tackling child hunger where it is a barrier to education in UK schools. The charity provides free, healthy breakfasts and expert support to schools where children arrive in the morning too hungry to learn.</p> <p>To receive support from Magic Breakfast, an application form must be submitted for review. For a school in England to be eligible, at least 35% of pupils should be recorded as eligible for Pupil Premium. Not all eligible schools will receive support; a panel decide which schools are successful, depending on their chosen priorities.</p> <p>Once applications are assessed, and funding is available, selected schools are met to ensure they are suitable and then offered two years free provision where they pay nothing and can order as much food as they need for their provision.</p> <p>Towards the end of this period, the school is met with to look at moving them over to the membership model where depending on their pupil numbers they will pay between £500- £1500 per year to continue receiving as much food as they need.</p> <p>Schools that are not eligible or are unsuccessful in their initial application can still access the membership offer.</p>
<p>How it works:</p>	<p>Magic Breakfast works with schools on an individual level. They aim to get a really good understanding of the school, it's children and it's local community. The optimum breakfast provision ensures that every child can access a healthy breakfast, without barrier or stigma, but the way this is done can look very different from one school to the next.</p> <p>Magic Breakfast can then offer food, resources and support. If a breakfast provision is already in place, they may suggest ways in which it could expand its reach, overcome challenges, or add even more value to the provision.</p> <p>Over the following months and years, Magic Breakfast will then work with the school in a tailored way, according to need and how the breakfast provision develops. They will also offer support with measuring impact, strategies to bring in difficult to reach children, building nurture, engaging parents, and more.</p>
<p>Outcomes:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No children starting the school day without having any breakfast • Every pupil has the right fuel for learning
<p>Cost:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost incurred is paid by the school(s). Schools can choose how they

	<p>facilitate Magic Breakfast which determines cost (e.g. extra staff). The cost of milk and spreads is paid by the school, but Magic Breakfast provide porridge, wholegrain cereals, wholemeal bagels, unsweetened juice, and no added sugar baked beans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership subscription fees for target schools (that are unsuccessful with initial bids to Magic Breakfast)
Action for members:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and raise awareness of Magic Breakfast and/or the benefit of school breakfast clubs • Approach and encourage schools in the South Area that have previously been contacted by Magic Breakfast but have never responded. These schools are; Birdwell Primary, Greenfield, Upperwood, Wombwell Park Street, and Hunningley • Contact schools in the South Area to conduct an audit of which schools have a breakfast club provision. Public Health can then support to map these schools against levels of underweight pupils. • Potentially fund the membership subscription to the schools who do not receive free provision or fund alternative breakfast clubs separate to Magic Breakfast • Work to reduce any stigma attached to breakfast clubs whilst promoting the numerous benefits such as; free nutritious breakfasts so that children can focus and are ready to learn and ensuring good attendance rates. Refer to Cost of Hunger document: Appendix 3

Recommendations

1. Members to consider which options to pursue and which actions to take in order to raise awareness of food access provision and to help increase the number of healthy weight children in Barnsley South Area
2. Members to use their influence and networks to encourage schools to engage and promote free school meals to parents/carers and pupils
3. Identify primary schools in South Area that are willing to pilot the Lunch Box Policy

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