

**Full Council – 20 March 2024**

**Written question from Ms H Wagstaff to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health**

There are recommendations from the Director of Public Health's Annual Report for Childhood Obesity - Call to Action. Are there any provisions or a similar report, regarding the monitoring of underweight children in schools, considering the rise of mental health and eating disorders in children, the cost of living crisis and the increase in school meal and food costs as well as quality of food provided by outside catering companies, and monitoring of free school meal uptake (do children eat the free school meals provided - not just a tray bake or a slice of pizza at break time as an example), in secondary schools?

## ***Response***

Thank you for raising the important issue regarding the monitoring of underweight children in schools and highlighting a number of associated issues that some of our children and young people will be facing. Achieving a healthy weight in childhood is important for a child's physical, social and mental wellbeing and readiness to learn, which also sets the foundation for their health and wellbeing in adulthood. The Director of Public Health report is an independent report and this year a focus on Obesity does not detract from other important health issues.

Through delivery of the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) Isle of Wight Council annually monitors the prevalence of underweight children in schools. The NCMP is a nationally mandated public health programme that measures children's height and weight in Reception and Year 6, to calculate their weight category as being either underweight, healthy weight, overweight, or very overweight. One of the key aims of the NCMP is to increase public and professional understanding of weight issues in children.

In addition to providing population level data that allow us to track trends, we act on results from the NCMP to ensure there is local provision of initiatives for families to support their children being a healthy weight. Children's weight and height information is sensitively shared with parents and carers in feedback letters, and support offered by School Nurses about their children's measurements, weight, growth, body image, and eating patterns, as well as any other concerns parents/carers may have about their physical and emotional health.

As mentioned in the Director of Public Health's Annual Report for Childhood Obesity - Call to Action, The Isle of Wight takes a whole setting approach to healthy weight. Healthy eating is a component of the PEACH public health programme for all early years and school settings for the Island, providing information and advice, teaching resources and training on a range of health issues. On the topic of [healthy eating](#), it brings together in one place national and local guidance, example policies and practical toolkits. The education setting approach to healthy weight includes provision of a nutritious and varied menu in the school meals service and free school meals for some children.