



Healthy Weight for Children

Action Plan 2024 - 2028

An implementation guide for Level 0, 1a and 1b of the Model of Care for the Management of Overweight and Obesity for Children & Young People.



INTRODUCTION

No matter where they live, every child should have the opportunity to thrive.

We need to act now to improve children's health. Over the last 30 years, similar to in other countries in Europe and across the world, the levels of overweight and obesity in Ireland have increased significantly across all age groups, social class and genders. This shift in population level BMI is heavily influenced and shaped by changes in the environment that we are born into, live, work, play and age in.

Between 1990 and 2008, the levels of overweight and obesity in Irish children doubled across all age groups. In recent years the levels have plateaued, albeit at the higher level – about 1 in 5 younger children live with overweight and obesity, rising to 1 in 4 for adolescents. However, we see a higher proportion of children and adolescents living with obesity in areas of poverty and disadvantage.

What surrounds us shapes our health. Factors like how easy and affordable it is to buy nutritious food, how our shops and streets are designed, the opportunities we have to be active every day and how foods are marketed all play a part and can be improved by national policy and action across a wide range of areas.

The Healthy Weight for Children Framework (HSE 2019) provides strategic direction for a national and sustainable approach to improving child health and preventing obesity. It puts a child health lens on the Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan.

The HSE has an important role to play in promoting child health and preventing obesity. The Healthy Weight for Children Action Plans provide a platform for co-ordinating and connecting actions across multiple HSE services to strengthen our capacity for child health promotion and obesity prevention.

This Plan builds on the first Action Plan (2021–2023), and importantly leverages the success in building commitment and leadership at regional level for child health and obesity prevention. It recognises the change in health service organisational structure, particularly the devolution of operational responsibility and accountability to the Regional Health Areas. This Plan sets out the key actions that will be co-ordinated and delivered at national level to enable and facilitate operational activity at regional and local level. As each Regional Health Area develops, child health and obesity prevention will continue to be a focus and delivery of priority outcomes will be facilitated through area Healthy Weight for Children Implementation Groups.

Sustained collaboration between the National Healthy Childhood Programme and Healthy Eating Active Living Programme will ensure a continued focus on strengthening our capacity to influence policy and actions other sectors to create environments where it is easier for everyone to live healthily. – and for every child to thrive.

We would like to thank the many colleagues who have contributed to the development of this Plan. Their commitment to and leadership for the Healthy Weight for Children agenda across health services is central to our collective effort to improve the health of all children.



Dr Abigail Collins

National Clinical Lead

Child Health Public Health



Sarah O'Brien

National Lead

Healthy Eating Active Living Programme

ACTION PLAN INDEX

THE PLAN IS DIVIDED INTO TWO SECTIONS WITH:

01

National actions that support planning, enablement and performance in regions;

02

Regional core outcomes to support regional HWfC Implementation Group can use to plan and prioritise within their local context.

NATIONAL ACTIONS →

Addresses areas **1,3,4,5,6,7,9,10** from the **Healthy Weight for Children Framework**

HSE ACTION AREA 1

Establish effective governance, implementation and monitoring structures

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Leadership, policy, regulation and legislation

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Managing, evaluating & supporting successful implementation

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Planning for resource allocation and additional funding

HSE ACTION AREA 2

Provide training and supports to enable health professionals intervene at critical points pre-conceptually and as part of the Universal Child Health Programme

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Leadership, policy, regulation and legislation

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Managing, evaluating & supporting successful implementation

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Planning for resource allocation and additional funding

HSE ACTION AREA 3

Provide consistent information, messaging and communications on healthy weight and lifestyles

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HSE ACTION AREA 4

Work with a range of partners and sectors to support a population approach to creating healthy lifestyles including delivery of sustainable, effective, community based healthy lifestyle interventions

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Education and support for parents and caregivers

HSE ACTION AREA 5

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Population level monitoring of growth and behaviours

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Managing, evaluating & supporting successful implementation

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Planning for resource allocation and additional funding

ACTION AREA 1:

Maintain effective governance, implementation and monitoring structures

KEY OUTPUTS BY 2028

01

Leadership capacity within health sector is established through functioning governance and implementation structures

02

Health service capacity to inform and influence policy, regulation and legislation to address “obesogenic environment” is strengthened

2024 Priorities

| No | Action | Owner | Timeframe |
|----|--|-------------|-------------|
| 1a | Establish the HWfC HSE Steering Group and coordinate the meetings | HEAL & NHCP | 2024 - 2028 |
| 1b | Coordinate the HWfC Partner Forum meetings | HEAL & NHCP | 2024 - 2028 |
| 1c | Ensure appropriate representation and input from HSE on cross government oversight & working groups, including Obesity Policy, Better Outcomes Brighter Futures and First Five, Diabetes Prevention Programme, Sláintecare oversight, implementation groups and subgroups. | HEAL & NHCP | 2024-2028 |
| 1d | HSE to work with IPH and other partners to continue to build capacity to understand and address the commercial determinants of health | HWB | 2024-2026 |
| 1e | Develop guidance on how the HSE engages with industries whose products and services are harmful to health. | HWB | 2024-2026 |
| 1f | Continue to drive the implementation of the HSE breastfeeding action plan. | NHCP | 2024-2028 |
| 1g | Collaborate with partners such as Institute of Public Health, Safefood, Irish Heart, and other stakeholders to develop position papers to inform discourse on policy to address factors contributing to the ‘obesogenic environment’. | HEAL | 2024-2028 |
| 1h | Collaborate with Irish Heart Foundation on a research project to model the impact of expanding the application of a sugar tax. | HEAL | 2024-2026 |
| 1i | Collaborate with OPIOG Healthy Eating subgroup to explore how the rollout of the free school meals can be monitored and managed to ensure it supports the implementation of the nutrition standards for schools. | HEAL | 2024-2028 |
| 1j | Coordinate an annual learning and sharing event. | HEAL | 2024-2028 |

ACTION AREA 2:

Provide training and supports to enable health professionals intervene at critical points pre-conceptually and as part of the Universal Child Health

KEY OUTPUTS BY 2028

01

A suite of updated evidence based training and resources are available

02

Workforce is equipped with relevant knowledge and skills

2024 Priorities

| No | Action | Owner | Timeframe |
|----|--|---|-----------|
| 2a | Work with RCSI and DOH to mainstream resourcing to continue access to www.childhoodobesity.ie training | HEAL | 2024-2028 |
| 2b | Work with the two specialist community based Child & Young People Weight Management services to further develop and refine services. | National Clinical Programme for Obesity | 2024-2028 |
| 2c | Develop and disseminate a list of recommended training & education resources for healthcare professionals working in General Practice and Primary Care, to support the implementation of the Model of Care for the Management of Overweight and Obesity, in relation to children and young people. | National Clinical Programme Obesity | 2024 |
| 2d | Monitor activity and provide reports to regions on relevant child health E-Learning activity | NHCP | 2024-2028 |

2025 Priorities

| No | Action | Owner | Timeframe |
|----|--|---|-----------|
| 2e | Review and update HSE eLearning modules on Breastfeeding & Infant Nutrition. | NHCP | 2025 |
| 2f | Review and update Healthy START for Toddlers eLearning modules | NHCP | 2025 |
| 2g | Review and update the Healthy Weight for Children eLearning module. | NHCP | 2025 |
| 2h | Commence planning to establish additional Child & Young People Weight Management services multidisciplinary teams, dependent on new funding. | HSE National Clinical Programme for Obesity | 2025 |
| 2i | Review HWfC specific training needs as part of an overall update of training requirements for child health | NHCP | 2025 |
| 2j | To publish a Healthy Weight for Children National Support and Resource Guide for healthcare professionals | HEAL | 2025 |

ACTION AREA 3:

Provide consistent information, messaging and communications on healthy weight and behaviours

KEY OUTPUTS BY 2028

01

Evidence based information tailored to Irish parents is provided to all parents

02

Improve strategic communications to highlight HWfC work and share learnings with others.

2024 Priorities

| No | Action | Owner | Timeframe |
|----|---|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 3a | Work with safefood to promote and activate childhood obesity prevention campaigns. | HEAL | 2024-2028 |
| 3b | Develop and implement of a HSE Communications Strategy for childhood obesity prevention 2024 informed by bespoke parent research | NHCP | 2024-2028 |
| 3c | Continue to develop and promote MyChild.ie website and supports in relation to healthy behaviours - healthy eating, physical activity, screen-time, sleep and mental wellbeing. | NHCP | 2024-2028 |
| 3d | Develop new video content for mychild.ie to support parents with introducing family foods/weaning | HEAL | 2024 |
| 3e | Provide My Pregnancy, My Child books, and Active Play 0-3 suite of resources to all health areas for onward dissemination to parents | NHCP | Annually |
| 3f | Integrate child and family health messages in relation to healthy behaviours - healthy eating, physical activity, screen-time, sleep and mental wellbeing into HSE workplace wellbeing communications. | H&W Stakeholder Eng & Comms | 2024-2028 |
| 3g | Leverage existing forums such as Health & Wellbeing e-zine, Health Matters, regional H&W/Child Health e-zines/communications channels to improve strategic communications to highlight HWfC work and share learnings with others. | HEAL | 2024-2028 |
| 3h | Publish guidance for health professionals on effectively communicating on child health and obesity (Frameworks) and host webinar | HEAL | 2024 |
| 3i | Refresh and rebrand START parent booklet and screen-time leaflet as MyChild resources | HEAL | 2024 |
| 3j | Refresh and rebrand START lunchbox leaflet as a joint safefood-HSE publication | HEAL | 2024 |

ACTION AREA 4:

Work with a range of partners and sectors to support a population approach to creating healthy lifestyles including delivery of sustainable, effective, community based healthy lifestyle interventions

KEY OUTPUTS BY 2028

01

Early years and education sectors are appropriately supported by HSE to promote healthy lifestyles

02

Local partners across sectors supported to implement a population approach to healthy lifestyles

03

Scope and develop a standardised approach to delivery of weaning workshops and supporting resources in communities

2024 Priorities

| No | Action | Owner | Timeframe |
|----|---|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| 4a | Support development of an e-learning programme for early years educators that includes a suite of modules for supporting the health and well-being of the 0-3 and 3-6 age groups delivered through Better Start learning management system | H&W Education, Training & Prog Design | 2024 - 2025 |
| 4b | Revise and update HFME resources to reflect new national guidelines re: Vitamin D and plant based foods. | HEAL | 2024 - 2025 |
| 4c | Review with stakeholders local operating approach for sustainable delivery of the HFME programme with a focus to target health inequalities | HEAL | 2024-2025 |
| 4d | Provide training & classroom resources to support the implementation of the Wellbeing Framework and SPHE in schools. | H&W Education, Training & Prog Design | 2024 - 2028 |
| 4e | Scope and develop a standardised approach to delivery of weaning workshops and supporting resources in communities | HEAL | 2024 |
| 4f | Communications, training, and guidance to equip stakeholders with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to apply a local whole systems approach for obesity prevention including creating healthier food and physical activity environments in communities. | HEAL | 2024-2028 |

2025 Priorities

| No | Action | Owner | Timeframe |
|----|--|-------|-----------|
| 4g | Provide training to support the rollout of the nationally agreed standardised approach to delivery of weaning workshops in communities | HEAL | 2025 |

ACTION AREA 5:

Improve Population Level Monitoring and Data Collection

2024 Priorities

| No | Action | Owner | Timeframe |
|----|--|---|-------------|
| 5a | Scope out the evidence for integration of growth monitoring into Universal Child Health school contacts, including resource and implementation schedule, as part of the review of school health programme. | NHCP | 2024 - 2028 |
| 5b | Publish report on Round 6 Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative (COSI). | HEAL & National Nutrition Surveillance Centre DCU | 2024 |

2025 Priorities

| No | Action | Owner | Timeframe |
|----|---|-------|-------------|
| 5c | Scope out the integration of growth monitoring into Universal Child Health school contacts, including resource and implementation schedule, as part of the review of school health programme. | NHCP | 2024 - 2028 |

2026 Priorities

| No | Action | Owner | Timeframe |
|----|---|---|-----------|
| 5d | Plan for data collection and analysis for Round 7 COSI. | HEAL & National Nutrition Surveillance Centre DCU | 2026 |

REGIONAL OUTCOMES AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK

This is a planning framework for each regional Healthy Weight for Children Implementation Group to use to inform their regional priorities to achieve a common set of core outcomes nationally.

Area 1: Leadership and governance core outcomes

The purpose of these outcomes is to inform planning and priorities at the regional level

- There is a Healthy Weight for Children (HWfC) implementation group operating as part of existing child health governance structures in the regional health areas
- Health Promotion & Improvement and Child Health Programme are key stakeholders and collaborators in the HWfC implementation groups.
- There is appropriate input to and engagement with the local Children and Young People Services committees (CYPSC) from the regional health area HWfC implementation groups
- There is appropriate engagement from other local community and statutory partners identified as relevant to progressing the priorities of the areas regional HWfC implementation group
- A suite of key process and performance indicators to monitor progress in implementing the area plans are agreed.
- HWfC priorities feature in the regional health area Healthy Ireland Implementation Plan
- Sharing of learnings and experiences across the network of regional health area HWfC implementations

Area 2: Expected Core Outcomes training of health professionals pre-conceptually and as part of the Universal Child Health Programme.

The purpose of these outcomes is to inform planning and priorities at the local level

- Pregnant women can avail of HSE standardised Antenatal Education Programmes delivered by their public maternity service.
- Staff working in maternity, child health & primary care working with children complete HSE eLearning modules on Breastfeeding & Infant Nutrition.
- Child health and primary care staff working with children complete HSE nutrition eLearning modules including Healthy START for Toddlers and Healthy Weight for Children.
- PHN, Community Medical Officers, and paediatric staff complete HSE eLearning module on Growth Monitoring and, if available, skills to practice training.
- Child health and primary care workforce working with children have a greater awareness of key messages, resources & supports available around healthy weight for children.
- Child health and primary care workforce working with children complete the www.childhoodobesity.ie training

Action Area 3: Provide consistent information, messaging and communications on healthy weight and behaviours

The purpose of these outcomes is to inform planning and priorities at the regional level

- National campaigns and communications strategy is activated appropriately at local level
- Provide My Pregnancy, My Child books, and Active Play 0-3 suite of resources provided to all parents
- Child and family health messages in relation to healthy behaviours - healthy eating, physical activity, screen-time, sleep and mental wellbeing are integrated into communications, information, and resources for healthcare professionals
- Child and family health messages in relation to healthy behaviours - healthy eating, physical activity, screen-time, sleep and mental wellbeing are made available to local community and statutory partners to integrate into their communications, information for parents and those working with families

Action Area 4: Expected core outcomes working with a range of partners to support a population approach to adopting healthy behaviours including delivery of sustainable, effective, community based healthy lifestyle interventions

The purpose of these outcomes is to inform planning and priorities at the regional level

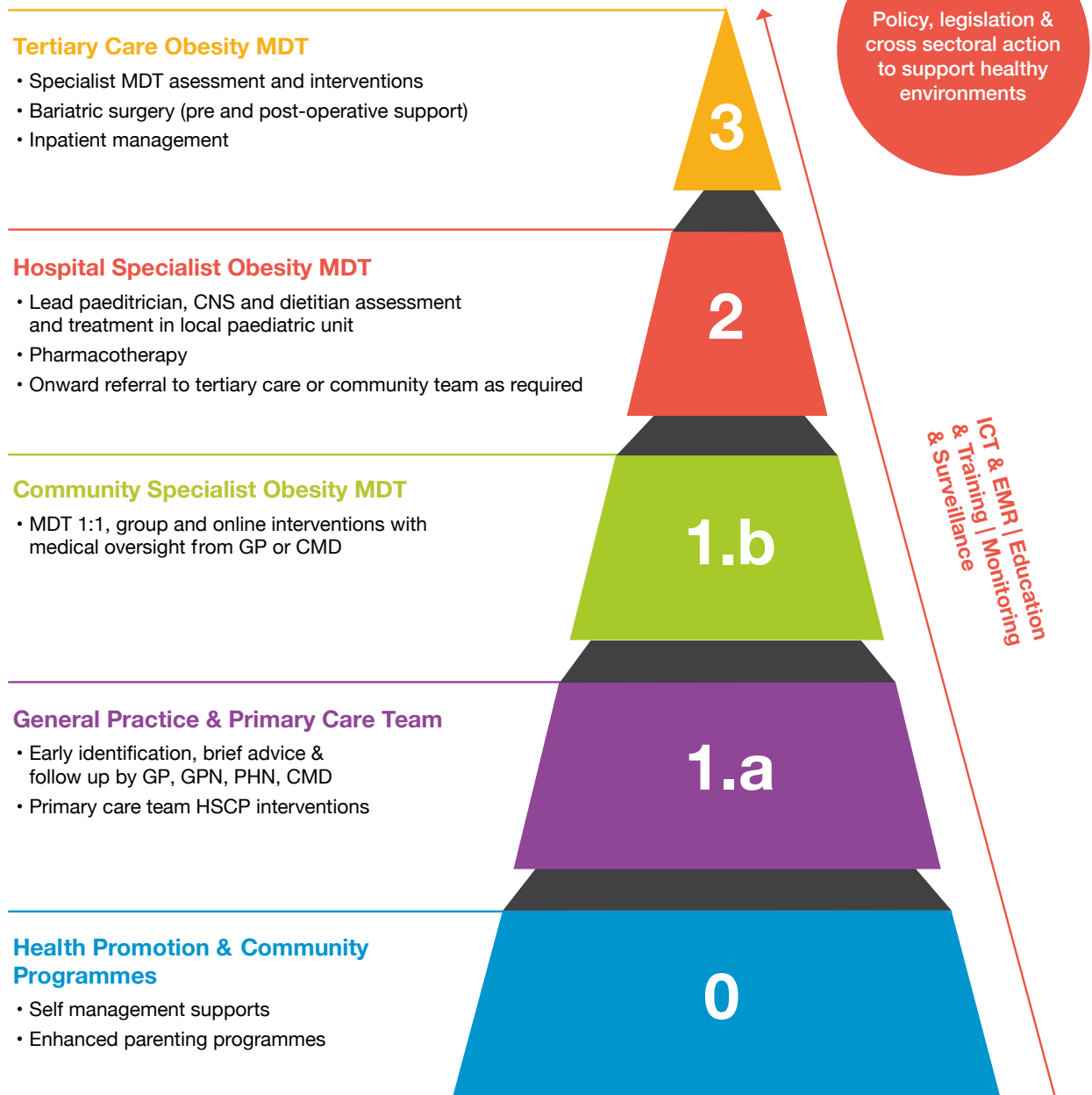
- HFME programme is available to parents and families in designated Sláintecare Healthy Community areas and other vulnerable groups
- Weaning workshops are available to parents and families in designated Sláintecare Healthy Community areas and other vulnerable groups
- Department of Education agreed teacher training on Wellbeing through Healthy Eating Policy and Wellbeing through Physical Activity is delivered by HP&I.
- Key stakeholders, in Sláintecare Healthy Community areas in particular, are engaged in a local whole systems approach to obesity prevention including creating healthier food and physical activity environments.
- Rollout the national agreed standardised approach to delivery of weaning workshops

APPENDIX 1

The Model of Care for Children and Young People

4 LEVELS OF CARE

EXAMPLES OF SERVICES



The model of care for children and young people aligns to the Paediatric Model of Care.

Glossary of Abbreviations:

- **MDT** Multi-Disciplinary Team
- **HSCP** Health And Social Care Professional
- **GP** General Practitioner
- **CMD** Community Medical Doctor
- **CNS** Clinical Nurse Specialist
- **GPN** General Practice Nurse
- **PHN** Public Health Nurse

APPENDIX 2

Population reach and levels of intensity in prevention and treatment of childhood obesity

For wide reach within a population, it is essential to offer interventions at several levels with increasing intensity of support, so parents and families may select from what suits their needs (Figure 8).

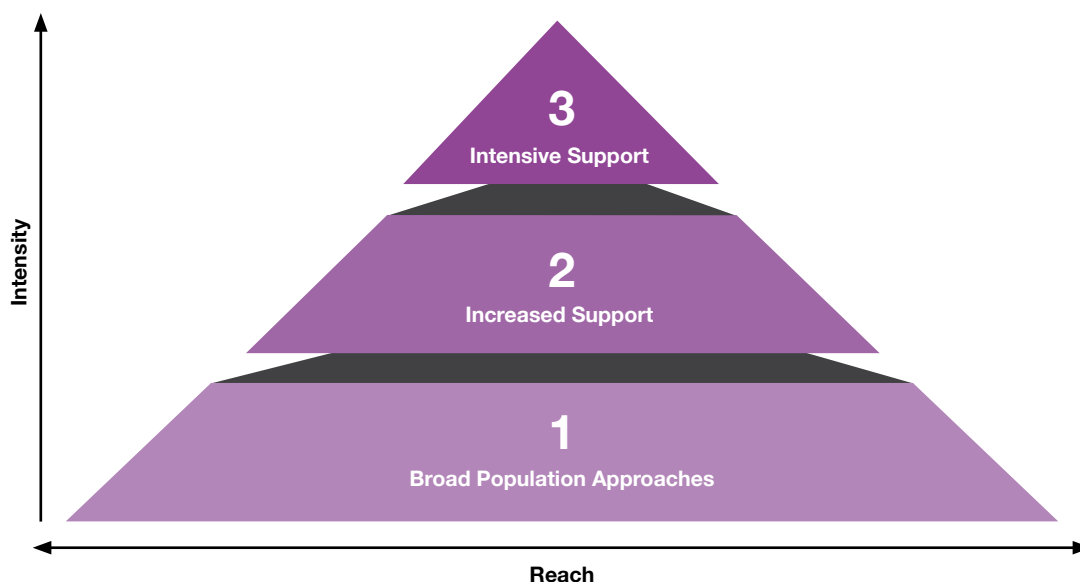


Figure 8: Population-based intervention levels by reach and intensity.

Level 1

Consists of broad-based messages for healthy behaviours that are available to the whole population. Examples of this in Ireland in relation to childhood obesity are key messages and education in relation to healthy environments, behaviours and parenting provided through the National Healthy Childhood Programme, safefood/HSE social marketing campaigns. [Aligns to Level 0 in Model of Care for Management of Overweight and Obesity](#)

Level 2

Provides additional support for those who require it through the provision of skill building in addition to education. Examples include programmes which develop cooking, physical activity or parenting skills and programmes that use motivational interviewing or counselling in addition to providing information. Examples of programmes at this level include Community Mothers Programme, Triple P - Healthy Meals Made Easy workshop, Triple P - Hassle Free Mealtimes workshop, Parents Plus-Healthy Families programme. [Aligns to Level 0 in Model of Care for Management of Overweight and Obesity](#)

Level 3

Provides intensive support for high-risk populations, for example, programmes targeted at lower socio-economic groups. As well as clinical intervention either individually or through group programmes for those who seek more intensive help, either because of greater risk, greater need or existing obesity. [Aligns to Level 1 & 2 in Model of Care for Management of Overweight and Obesity](#)

APPENDIX 3

Membership of Healthy Weight for Children working group who informed development of the Action Plan

- Sarah O'Brien, National Lead Healthy Eating Active Living Programme [Co-Chair]
- Dr Abigail Collins, National Clinical Lead National Healthy Childhood Programme [Co-Chair]
- Anne Pardy, Programme Lead National Healthy Childhood Programme
- Veronica Conti, Project Manager Healthy Eating Active Living Programme
- Margaret McQuillan, Head of Service, Health and Wellbeing CHO7
- Bedelia Collins, H&W/HP&I Manager, CHO3
- Dr Ide Nic Dhonncha, Principal Medical Officer, CHO1
- Mary Murnane, Community Dietitian Manager, CHO4
- Siobhan Sinnott, Child Health Programme Development Officer, CHO5
- Fiola Murphy, Child Health Programme Development Officer, CHO1
- Edel McNamara, HP&I Senior Community Dietitian, CHO9
- Aislinn Murphy, HP&I Senior Dietitian, CHO5

APPENDIX 4

Key programmes involved in the Healthy Weight For Children Action Plan

Healthy Eating Active Living Programme

The Healthy Eating Active Living Programme is one of a number of Policy Priority Programmes established by HSE Health & Wellbeing to co-ordinate and lead activity across the health services to ensure implementation of priority government policies in the context of Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing. The key policies the programme focuses on are Healthy Weight for Ireland: Obesity Policy and Action Plan and Get Ireland Active: National Physical Activity Plan.

The Healthy Eating Active Living Programme has a remit to mobilise the health services to improve health and wellbeing by increasing the levels of physical activity, healthy diet and healthier weight across service users, staff and the population as a whole, with a focus on families and children.

National Healthy Childhood Programme

The National Healthy Childhood Programme is one of a number of Policy Priority Programmes established by HSE Health & Wellbeing to co-ordinate and lead activity across the health services to ensure implementation of priority government policies. The key policies the programme focuses on are Better Outcomes Brighter Futures and National Maternity Strategy policies in the context of Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing.

The National Healthy Childhood Programme is informed by the:

- acknowledgement that the wider determinants of health play a significant part in child and adult health;
- benefits of a child health programme based on a model of progressive universalism - help for all and more help for those who need it;
- impact of the antenatal period on the development of the foetus;
- importance of maternal mental health and infant mental health and development.
- pivotal role of the parents in child development; and
- early identification of issues can enable early intervention to occur thus improving the outcomes for the child.

National Clinical Programme for Obesity

The National Clinical Programme for Obesity was set up as a joint initiative by the HSE Health and Wellbeing and the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) to develop a Model of Care for the Management of Overweight and Obesity. The Model of Care, approved by the HSE Clinical Forum in 2020, sets out how health services should be designed and developed to ensure that across the lifespan, an end-to-end approach is adopted for children, young people and adults. The implementation of the Model of Care for the Management of Overweight and Obesity is a joint initiative between HSE Health & Wellbeing and Clinical Strategy and Innovation.



National Clinical
Programme for
Obesity

Healthy Eating
Active Living
Programme

