

Cover Sheet

For this assessment I have submitted the following:

- Screen capture for a 15 minute power point presentation
- Script to support presentation

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work.

Presentation

Presented by Sarah Quinney

OBESITY IN THE EARLY YEARS

WELCOME

This Presentation will Consider:

- How obesity affects children in the early years in regards, to their health and well-being.
- Statistics.
- how Government policies and legislation/ organisations and the Early Years Practitioner can support healthy lifestyles and healthy eating.



(Welsh Government, 2024)

WHAT IS OBESITY?

Flegal and Ogden (2010) explain, Obesity refers to excess body fat or excess weight, though it is a challenge to define as different reports can use the same term but describe it differently.

The World Health Organisation (2025) define health as a chronic disease. It identifies access to healthy food, eating behaviours and the wider environment as some of the reasons obesity may affect people.

The NHS(2025) say In regard to children, they are still growing, which means it can be difficult to measure if they are overweight. They recommend calculating a child's body weight by measuring their BMI.

BODY MASS INDEX (BMI)

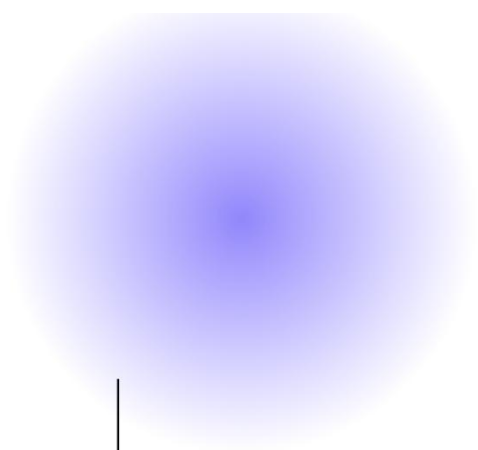
British Heart Foundation (2026) explain Body Mass Index (BMI) is calculated by dividing weight by height, then multiplying it. A number above 30 will be classed as obese. Although as agreed by the NHS (2025) it can be an inaccurate reading for young children.

The BMI calculator can be used by a parent or guardian for children ages 17 or under, although for under two years the child should be seen by their GP or health visitor (NHS, 2024).

Public Health Wales (2026) carry out the Welsh Government's Child Measurement Programme where nursing teams are responsible for taking measurements of each child and connecting with families who must give consent for this. They say this way of measuring differs to that of an adult as it looks at variables such as age and sex.

Between 2018/19 the measurement program found, across the local authorities of Wales, 8.6% – 20.7% of children aged 4-5 were overweight or obese (Welsh Government, 2024).

Numbers have since increased, with Public Health Wales (2026) finding 27.3% of 4-5 year olds in Wales are either obese or overweight, stating this as the highest all-Wales number on record since the program began.



WHAT CAUSES OBESITY IN CHILDREN

Dawson (2017) state that children living in disadvantaged areas are three times more likely to become obese when hitting school age. They argue that cuts in services and short-term planning has had a negative impact on families and believes support from charities such as, The Henry, healthy start charity, can build on the confidence and knowledge of parents and make a lasting change.

NICE (2023) say that families in deprived areas are more likely to be overweight due to the lack of access to healthy, nutritious food and lack of exercise. The guidance suggests when developing services to support families, ideas need to be realistic with consideration and understanding of these barriers.

The Food Foundation (2025) state 'The most deprived fifth of the population would need to spend 45% of their disposable income on food to afford the government-recommended healthy diet, rising to 70% for households with children'. These statistics were reported in 2025, however, more recently The Food Foundation (2026) has reported an increase in these figures, suggesting families would now have to spend 85% of their disposable income in order to eat following the Eatwell guide.

The NHS (2025) suggest that toddlers and pre-school children should be active for at least three hours per day. Advising the more active, the better, with access to outdoors.

It has been found that, globally, children in Wales were the least physically active, showing a higher rate of unhealthy lifestyles compared to other countries within the UK. The recommendation was given, to advise 120 hours per week of physical activities within schools, though Welsh Government rejected this recommendation as it feels the new curriculum allows providers the flexibility and freedom to plan for active learning (Clifton, 2024).

Youth Sport Trust (2024) believes there needs to be a change in society, stating that 7 in 10 parents feel technology is preventing their children from being more active. The Trust feel there needs to be a whole change in the way society promotes and ingrains physical activity into daily life.

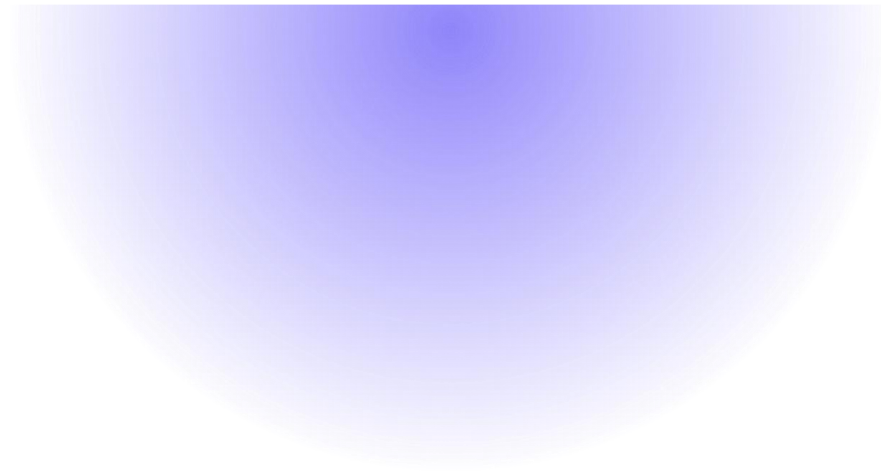
THE EFFECTS OF OBESITY IN CHILDREN

The UN Convention on the rights of the child, Article 24 health and health services (n.d.) state, 'Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this' (UNCRC, n.d.).

Public Health Wales (2026) share the views of Rachel Bath, Consultant in Public Health and lead for Early Years at Public Health Wales, who believes the foundations of health and a healthy life is built from the early years. Suggesting that preventing children from becoming overweight will have the biggest effect on the rest of their lives.

Dr Johnson, who is quoted in Public Health Wales (2026) refers to obesity as a 'complex task', saying that focus should start as early as possible to prevent obesity rather than treatment, in order to make a difference to people's lives.

This is supported the Children's Commissioner for Wales (2026) who say, when looking at obesity and healthy weight in children, it is the surroundings and the environment that restrict their actions, referring to challenges such as poverty and advancement in technology.



SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

The UN Convention on the rights of the child, Article 24 health and health services (n.d.) state, 'Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this' (UNCRC, n.d.).

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BRONFENBRENNER

(Hayes, O'Toole, and Halpenny, 2017) suggest Bronfenbrenner also believed that the environment a child is in, can impact their behaviour and development. He felt that children are influenced not only by their home life, but of the wider surrounding area. He shared his findings into home backgrounds, saying when children from a disadvantaged background, built friendships with those from more advantaged homes, the outcomes for the child were better than those who were all from deprived backgrounds.

Welsh Government (2024) set out guidance for eating in childcare settings. It believes childcare settings are valuable in supporting children to a healthy start in life. It advises settings to offer healthy nutritional food to children and provide activities to support healthy eating. It also sets out guidance for practitioners to serve correct portion sizes, with the recommendation of eating five different vegetables per day.

HOW CAN EARLY YEARS
PRACTITIONERS HELP TO
SUPPORT A HEALTHY
LIFESTYLE FOR CHILDREN?

Welsh Government (2022) have developed a curriculum in an attempt to develop healthy children. Within its guidance for practitioners it states, the practitioner will help learners to.. 'apply knowledge about the impact of diet and exercise on physical and mental health in their daily lives'.

Children and families based within selected areas of Newport have access to Flying Start, it offers an enhanced health service which is linked to 2 and a half hours free childcare per day (Newport City Council, 2026).

The health Foundation (2025) share that people living in deprived areas are more likely to live in high-crime areas. It goes on to talk about the impacts on health, suggesting, when living in a high-crime area, people are less likely to access green spaces due to fear.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this discussion it can be seen that children and families may be facing many challenges in regards to living a healthy lifestyle. Evidence shows Welsh Government values health and wellbeing in the early years. However, as the research also shows, more could be done to support those in poverty as it seems more complex than just advising families to 'eat healthier' and 'move more'. The points mentioned show the potential value a childcare provider or school can make, by providing healthy meals and space to explore and play.



THANKYOU

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Script to support presentation

Sarah Quinney

I am going to be presenting a piece looking at obesity in the early years.

This presentation will consider..

- Considering how it affects children in the early years in regards to their health and well-being.
- will look at statistics and reports to support this
- (and) will consider how Government policies and legislation/ organisations and the early years practitioner can support healthy lifestyles and healthy eating.

What is obesity?

Flegal and Ogden (2010) explain, Obesity refers to excess body fat or excess weight, though it is a challenge to define as different reports can use the same term but describe it differently.

The World Health Organisation (2025) define health as a chronic disease. It identifies access to healthy food, eating behaviours and the wider environment as some of the reasons obesity may affect people.

The National Health Service (NHS) (2025) say In regards to children, they are still growing, which means it can be difficult to measure if they are overweight, recommending calculating a child's body weight by measuring their BMI.

How do we measure BMI

British Heart Foundation (2026)) explain Body Mass Index (BMI) is calculated by dividing weight by height, then multiplying it. A number above 30 will be classed as obese. Although as agreed by the NHS (2025) it can be an inaccurate reading for young children.

The BMI calculator is can be used by a parent or guardian for children ages 17 or under, although for under two years the child should be seen by their GP or health visitor (NHS, 2024).

Public Health Wales (2026) carry out the Welsh Government's Child Measurement Programme where nursing teams are responsible for taking measurements of each child and connecting with families who must give consent for this. They say this way of measuring differs to that of an adult as it looks at variables such as age and sex.

This could potentially avoid misreading a child as obese when they could be growing natural and healthily.

Between 2018/19 the measurement program found across the local authorities of Wales, the areas ranged from 8.6% - 20.7% of children aged 4-5 were overweight or obese (Welsh Government, 2024).

Numbers have since increased, with Public Health Wales (2026) finding 27.3% of 4-5 year olds in Wales are either obese or overweight, stating this as the highest all-Wales number on record since the program began.

With rates of obesity increasing, it needs to be questioned why obesity in children is increasing and how the government and local authorities and agencies can help.

Why are children overweight?

Dawson (2017) state that children living in disadvantaged areas are 3 times more likely to become obese when hitting school age. They argue that cuts in services and short term planning has had a negative impact on families and believes support from charities such as, The Henry, healthy start charity, will build on the confidence and knowledge of parents and can make a lasting change.

In agreement with the impact of poverty is

NICE (2023) who say that families in deprived areas are more likely to be overweight due to the lack of access to healthy, nutritious food and lack of exercise. The guidance suggests when developing services to support families, ideas need to be realistic with consideration and understanding of these barriers.

This could suggest, it may not be knowledge of healthy eating that prevents a family from eating well, but the cost of providing healthy meals.

The Food Foundation (2025) state 'The most deprived fifth of the population would need to spend 45% of their disposable income on food to afford the government-recommended healthy diet, rising to 70% for households with children'.

These statistics were reported in 2025, however, more recently The Food Foundation (2026) has reported an increase in these figures, suggesting families would now have to spend 85% of their disposable income in order to eat following the Eatwell guide.

The comparison of these figures show a 15% percent increase from last year. From this it can be seen how healthy eating could be challenging for families who are struggling financially particularly with rises such as these impacting households.

The NHS suggest that toddlers and pre-school children should be active for at least three hours per day. Advising the more active, the better, with access to outdoors.

However

It has been found that, globally, children in Wales were the least physically active, showing a higher rate of unhealthy lifestyles compared to other countries within the UK. The recommendation was given, to advise 120 hours per week of physical activities within schools, though Welsh Government rejected this recommendation as it feels the new curriculum allows providers the flexibility and freedom to plan for active learning (Clifton, 2024).

There is also the added challenge of the digital world we are now living in.

Youth Sport Trust (2024) believes there needs to be a change in society, stating that 7 in 10 parents feel technology is preventing their children from being more active. The Trust feel there needs to be a whole change in the way society promotes and ingrains physical activity into daily life.

Effects of obesity

The World Health Organization (2025) explains obesity can bring on early diseases such as, type 2 diabetes. As well as illnesses it can impact a child's concentration in school. It may also effect self esteem as it can put a child at risk of bullying.

The effects of obesity not only impacts childhood.

Welsh Government (2024) explain, a child who is overweight or obese is at more risk of being obese of overweight as an adult, leading to health risks, such as heart disease and cancer.

The UK Government (2022) support these points, adding that obesity puts young people at risk of ill health and reduces life expectancy.

Support for children

The UN Convention on the rights of the child, Article 24 health and health services (n.d.) state,

‘Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this’.

Public Health Wales (2026) share the views of

Rachel Bath, Consultant in Public Health and lead for Early Years at Public Health Wales who believes the foundations of health and a healthy life is built from the early years. Suggesting that preventing children from becoming overweight will have the biggest effect on the rest of their lives

In agreement with this is

Dr Ilona Johnson, Consultant in Public Health and Interim co-Director of Health Improvement at Public Health Wales, quoted in Public Health Wales (2026) who refer to obesity as a ‘complex task’, saying that focus should start as early as possible to prevent obesity rather than treatment in order to make a difference to peoples lives.

These points suggest prevention could be more affective than cure.

This is supported by Rocio Cifuentes, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales (2026) who say, when looking at obesity and healthy weight in children, it is the surroundings and the environment that restrict their actions, referring to challenges such as poverty and advancement in technology.

From these points it should be considered where the role of the Early years practitioner comes into this , as they are working closely with children and their families.

Bronfenbrenner

(Hayes, O'Toole, and Halpenny, 2017) suggest Bronfenbrenner also believed that the environment a child is in, can impact their behaviour and development. he felt that children are influenced not only by their home life but of the wider surrounding area. He shared his findings into home backgrounds, saying when children from a disadvantaged background built friendships with those from more advantaged homes, the outcomes for the child were better than those who were all from deprived backgrounds.

This suggests that children are able to learn from others and their behaviours. In regards to the early years, modelling healthy eating and promoting active play could positively impact a child's future outcome.

Welsh Government (2024) set out guidance for eating in childcare settings. It believes childcare settings are valuable in supporting children to a healthy start in life. It advises settings to offer healthy nutritional food to children, and provide activities to support healthy eating. It also encourages practitioners to support mothers through breastfeeding and introducing solid foods.

As already mentioned, poverty has an impact on the choices families have to make, so these guide

What can the early years do to support a healthy lifestyle

Welsh Government have developed a curriculum in an attempt to develop healthy children. Within its guidance for practitioners it states, the practitioner will help learners to..

'apply knowledge about the impact of diet and exercise on physical and mental health in their daily lives'.

This puts responsibility onto the practitioner to develop a curriculum within the setting to support these needs.

children and families based within areas of Newport are able to access to Flying Start, This offer an enhanced health service which is linked to 2 and a half hours free childcare per day (Newport City Council, 2026).

By working closely with other services, such as health visitors, this can allow the practitioner and other agencies to develop a plan for a child and their family who may need more support in regards to a healthy lifestyle.

The health Foundation (2025) share that people living in deprived areas are more likely to live in high-crime areas. It goes on to talk about the impacts on health, suggesting, when living in a high-crime area, people are less likely to access green spaces due to fear.

As previously mentioned Flying start (Newport City Centre, 2026) offer two and a half hours of free childcare.

With access to a large space and equipment this could be beneficial in regards to exercise for children who have little access to the outdoors. Furthermore, for children who are living in overcrowded flats, with no access to garden space, this could also impact the amount of movement they make in a day.

It can be argued that there are 13 weeks within the year where children are unable to access this provision. However, it should also be noted that some support could be better than no support at all.

Throughout this discussion it can be seen that children and families may be facing many challenges in regards to living a healthy lifestyle. Evidence shows the Welsh Government values health and wellbeing in the early years. However, as the research also shows, more could be done to support those in poverty as it seems more complex than just advising families to 'eat healthier' and 'move more'. The points mentioned show the potential value a childcare provider or school can make, by providing healthy meals and space to explore and play.

Thankyou for taking the time to listen