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No AI was used in this assignment

15-minute Recording

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### Script for Recording

Obesity in childhood is the specific aspect of health and well-being that will be explored in depth, looking at the effects it has on children in the early years. The subject of obesity in childhood was chosen due to the acknowledgement of the growing number of children within the early years who are becoming obese.

According to the National Health Service [hereafter NHS] (2023), the term obese highlights a person who carries excess body fat. Aswell as this, the World Health Organisation [hereafter WHO] (2025) explains that being overweight and obese refer to an unhealthy or excessive build-up of body fat that can negatively impact a persons health. It was also explained that a body mass index (BMI) above 25 indicates someone who is overweight, however a BMI over 30 is classified as obese. Obesity is a serious health concern in children and young people, as it increases the risk of many health conditions. Such as type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, types of cancers like bowel cancer, and it can increase the risk of having a stroke (NHS, 2023). As well as obesity causing physical health issues, living with obesity can affect quality of living and can result in mental health issues, like low self-esteem and depression (NHS, 2023).

In Wales, the latest figures suggest that more than a quarter of children aged between four and five are measured as being overweight or obese, and one in ten being obese (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2025). One of the main reasons which is causing more children to become overweight and obese is the rise in poverty. Living in poverty means struggling to heat your home, pay rent, or afford basic necessities for your children, leading to daily challenges filled with uncertainty and difficult financial choices (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2025). The ongoing stress that poverty causes can result in further difficulties and limiting people's ability to fully participate in society. Poverty can have a negative effect on a child's weight due to poorer families having a limited food budget. Families who have a limited food budget tend to choose high fat foods such as sugars, cereals, potatoes and processed meat products, this is due to them being more affordable and having longer use-by dates(Griffith, 2022, pp.1235-1258). In Wales, it has also been noted that individuals living in deprived areas of Wales are more likely to be obese and less likely to maintain a healthy diet compared to those who are living in more affluent

areas (Senedd, No Date). The Association of Convenience Stores emphasized the need to prioritise improving access to fruit and vegetables in disadvantaged communities (Senedd, No Date).

Childhood obesity has additional concerns for mental health, rather than just the physical consequences. One additional concern for children who are overweight or obese is the negative effects on social interaction. Bullying is widespread and the negative perceptions of children with obesity can increase their risk of developing eating disorders, experience social isolation, and engaging in less physical activity (Marcus, Danielsson and Hagman, 2022). Currently, childhood obesity carries such a strong stigma, that even though it is medically recognised as a disease, healthcare professionals are encouraged to avoid using the term “obesity”, in favour of more neutral language like “weight” or “body mass index” (Marcus, Danielsson and Hagman, 2022). This is because the medical labelling of an individual’s body can be damaging.

Childhood obesity is avoidable; there are changes which can be made in order to reduce the number of children who are obese. One of the easiest and most beneficial ways to maintain a healthier diet is to introduce a balanced diet.

Maintaining good health and feeling your best starts with a healthy, balanced diet (NHS, 2022). This would involve eating a diverse range of foods in the correct proportions and ensuring you consume the right amount of food and drink to support a healthy body weight (NHS, 2022). One way to understand what a healthy diet looks like is exploring the Eat Well Guide. The NHS Eatwell Guide divides the foods and drinks that we consume into five main food groups. The guide tells us to try and choose a variety of different foods from each of the food groups to help you get the wide range of nutrients your body needs to stay healthy (NHS, 2022). Although it is important to get some fats in your diet, foods that are high in fat, salt and sugar have been placed outside of the main Eatwell Guide as they are not necessary as part of a healthy, balanced diet and most people should cut down on these (NHS, 2022).

The NHS also suggests that on average, women should have around 2,000 calories a day and men should have around 2,500 calories a day (NHS, 2022). In summary, the Eatwell Guide shows that to have a healthy, balanced diet, people should aim to eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day, incorporate higher fibre foods like potatoes and pasta into their meals, consume beans, fish, meat and

eggs, eat unsaturated oils and spreads in small amounts, consume dairy, and drink plenty of fluids. This needs to be at least 6 to 8 glasses of fluids a day (NHS, 2022).

Public Health Wales (2025) outlines what changes that individuals can make in order to maintain a healthy diet. It included things like planning the weekly shop, eating a variety of foods, swapping unhealthy snacks for healthier options, trying home cooking, and making use of food related benefits if eligible. One of the most useful food related benefits which now supports healthy eating for children, is the introduction of free school meals in Wales. All primary school children in Wales are now eligible for Universal Primary Free School Meals. This initiative is part of the response to growing cost-of-living pressures on families and reflects a shared commitment to reducing child poverty and ensuring that no child goes hungry during the school day (Welsh Government, 2022). Free school meals also offer broader benefits such as encouraging healthy eating habits throughout the school, providing a wider variety of nutritious food options, supporting the development of social skills during mealtimes and enhancing behaviour and academic performance (Welsh Government, 2022). The Welsh Government (2014) outlines how local authorities must ensure that free drinking water is available on the premises of all maintained schools. It is also emphasised how pupils must have easy access to fresh, free drinking water at all times, particularly during breakfast and lunch periods. It is also vital that schools allow pupils to drink water freely throughout the day by promoting water on desks (Welsh Government, 2014). Under the Healthy Eating Regulations, both still and carbonated mineral water are allowed, However drinks containing sweeteners, sugars, honey, food colouring or flavouring are not permitted in schools (Welsh Government, 2014).

However, the health benefits of primary school meals for children have been questioned over the years, exploring how healthy the food actually is, which is being provided to children. In 2012, following a government announcement, Jamie Oliver called for immediate action on improving school meals, rather than commissioning more reports. He urged the government to act on the existing advice on the risks associated with poor-quality school food, arguing that time and resources should not be wasted on repeating well-known findings, and that school food standards urgently needed improvement (Jamie Oliver Enterprises Limited, 2024).

Another way to reduce the number of children who are obese, and overweight is to ensure that they are taking part in physical activity. In all childcare settings in Wales, it was outlined by the Welsh Government that there must be 120 minutes per week which is allocated for physical education. This means that children will engage in physical activity and exercise, meaning that children are active during school hours (National Assembly for Wales, 2019).

In conclusion, childhood obesity is a growing public health concern, particularly among children in the early years. It is a complex issue that is influenced by a range of factors, including poverty, poor diet and limited access to healthy foods. The physical and mental health consequences of obesity, such as chronic illness, social isolation, and low self-esteem, highlight the urgent need for coordinated action. While initiatives like Universal Free School Meals, access to drinking water in schools, and the promotion of the NHS Eatwell guide are important steps forward, there still needs to be a regular review on the nutritional food quality in schools in order to meet all children's needs. Furthermore, children need to continue to be encouraged to take part in physical activity, in order to tackle childhood obesity. There also needs to be continued support to families living in deprived areas, to ensure all children maintain a healthy diet.

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