

# SUPPORTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTHY NUTRITION

## Guide for Local Authority Colleagues

### The problem

- Millions of children in the UK are not meeting the recommended levels of physical activity, contributing to poor physical and mental health.
- Increasing rates of childhood obesity, especially in deprived communities, are straining the NHS.
- Many children have poor diets, low in fruits and vegetables and high in processed foods and sugars.

### What you can do at a local level

- Develop **local strategies to provide more free school meals** for children by setting up an auto-enrolment process to remove barriers for eligible families and reviewing how free school meals could be funded locally.
- Ensure that the **Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) funding is targeted** to meet local needs and is engaging with children across all age groups.
- Consider how **local authority advertising space can promote healthy food options** and restrict the advertising of foods high in fat, salt, and sugar.
- Develop **local resources to support families experiencing food insecurity** through options such as increasing uptake of benefits or Healthy Start vouchers, for example.
- Ensure that **leisure facilities are available and affordable to families**. Funding of local sports clubs and grassroots organisations that deliver physical activities at a hyper-local level can help to increase the uptake in disadvantaged communities.

## Evidence-based insights

Physical inactivity costs the UK an estimated **£7.4 billion** each year.

Due to restrictive eligibility, **900,000** children living in poverty in England do not qualify for free school meals.

## Examples of good practice that you may wish to explore

### Restrictions on advertising high fat, salt, and sugar foods on Council advertising space

Policies such as these aim to change the narrative put forward by the food and drink industry and to balance the advertising realm to also promoting healthy choices.

### Keighley Schools Together

Developed resources to support parents that needed support with food insecurity to find the right help at the right time. The scheme also promoted the national Healthy Start Programme, so that more families were able to access free food and vitamins.

### Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme

HAF is a national school holiday programme for young people aged 13-16 years that provides free nutritious meals and activities (including physical activity) in the school holidays.

### Free school meal auto-enrolment and funding of free school meals

Auto-enrolment helps overcome barriers to the current application process and reduce inequalities. Funding free school meals locally, particularly in schools identified in areas of need, has taken stigma and administrative burden away from the process.

Check out the innovative approaches outlined in this briefing and **consider implementing these practices into your local area/constituency.**



Scan the QR Code for the report

**Please share this guide and start a discussion in your organisation about how we can all play our role in building a country that works for all children and young people.**