



East of Scotland  
Partnership  
Prevention & Remission of  
Type 2 Diabetes Programme



# Eyemouth Whole Systems Approach Summary Annual Report

## Introduction

This report celebrates the considerable achievements of people and partners who have taken forward a Whole Systems Approach in Eyemouth over the last two and a half years. The aim of this work was to take a community led approach to improve diet and healthy weight.

The piloting of a Whole Systems Approach in Eyemouth was first approved at the Community Planning Partnership in September 2020. Initial planning and implementation stages were stalled during the pandemic and our first workshop eventually took place in March 2021 with 42 representatives from the community and wider stakeholders starting the process of identifying local priority actions.

Since then a large team of staff and volunteers have worked to progress our agreed eight key actions and have reached thousands of homes and residents in Eyemouth adding their contribution to supporting health and wellbeing in our children and young people healthy.

We have recognised that we have made a difference to those people who have been reached by the Whole System Approach work and this report outlines and celebrates our achievements and outcomes.

We have also acknowledged in our report that in order to address the wider obesogenic environment change has to come from within the system itself and we therefore hope to continue to use the collective influence of our partnership to promote health and wellbeing.

I would like to add, as part of this report, my thanks to all the volunteers who have contributed so much to the success of this project.

Jenni Craig  
Executive Sponsor – Whole Systems Approach  
Director – Resilient Communities  
Scottish Borders Council

## Improving Child Health

We want children to have the best start in life, improve children's health and wellbeing by having opportunities to eat well and be active. Every child should have the same opportunities to thrive, no matter where they live.

Currently there is a flood of unhealthy food options available to families and a trickle of opportunities to access healthier food options and to be physically active with limited safe outdoor spaces where children can run and play. This leads to poor health outcomes and high rates of children living with obesity.

There are concrete steps we can take to reduce the flow of unhealthy food while increasing the flow of affordable and healthy food options. We can shape opportunities to be physically active by increasing the use of good quality green spaces and sharing information about what's available locally to support child health.

## Whole Systems Approach to Diet and Healthy Weight

Rather than being the sole responsibilities of individuals, overweight and obesity are the result of a complex web of interrelated factors (policy, environmental, social, economic, cultural and biological)<sup>1,2,3</sup> across systems, which lie beyond individual control. Despite this however, many interventions continue to place emphasis on approaches that focus on individual behaviour change<sup>3</sup>.

The term 'obesogenic environment' is used to refer to the role environmental factors may play in determining both nutrition and physical activity. For example, the Foresight Report <sup>5</sup> described how environmental factors may operate by determining the availability and consumption of different foodstuffs and also the levels of physical activity undertaken by populations. The National Institute of Health describes obesogenic environment as 'the sum of influences that the surroundings, opportunities, or conditions of life have on promoting obesity in individuals or populations'.

A Whole System Approach plays an important role in delivering change across the "obesogenic system", responding to the need for a coordinated collaborative approach to create an environment where people can maintain their health and wellbeing in relation to food and healthy weight.

Whole Systems Approach is defined as applying systems thinking and processes that enables "an on-going flexible approach by a broad range of stakeholders, to identify and understand current and emerging public health issues where, by working together, we can deliver sustainable change and better lives for the people in Scotland" <sup>4</sup>.

Scottish Borders was invited to participate as a pilot area for Whole Systems Approach, through their involvement in the East of Scotland Partnership for the Prevention and Remission of Type 2 Diabetes. Scottish Borders is one of eight early adopter areas in Scotland and Eyemouth was chosen as the town to take this forward for the following reasons.

Eyemouth had established positive collaborative working relationships between community members and groups, local service providers and community planning partners whilst maintaining a focus on reducing health inequalities. There were a number of active partnerships with shared aims for health and wellbeing as well as children and families engaging in activities offered in early year's settings. It was also recognised that Eyemouth had successfully responded to community need for emergency support during the covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to these strengths, there were some specific challenges and with child poverty a growing concern across Scotland, Eyemouth was no exception. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated outcomes for communities living on low incomes and who were already at risk of experiencing poor health.

Eyemouth therefore adopted a community led Whole Systems Approach to supporting and promoting healthy weight, eating well and being physically active with a focus on children and health inequalities.

## Governance and Funding

### Governance

For the purposes of this document – a **stakeholder** is defined as a person or group with an interest or concern in community led health or diet and healthy weight. This includes, therefore, volunteers and community members.

The effective implementation of a local Whole Systems Approach requires the establishment of governance structures that can offer support to the process. Effective communication and building appropriate governance structures helps stakeholders to understand the process. Collaborative leadership at four different levels has been instrumental to the progress in Eyemouth. The following structures were implemented in January 2021.

<b>Governance Group</b>		
<b>Lead – Chair – Director of Resilient Communities, Scottish Borders Council</b>		
<b>Working Group</b>		
<b>Lead – Public Health</b>		
<b>Priority Theme Group 1</b> <b>Communication</b>	<b>Priority Theme Group 2</b> <b>Family Participation and Learning</b>	<b>Priority Theme Group 3</b> <b>Outdoor Activities</b>
<b>National Partners</b>		
<b>Obesity Action Scotland, East of Scotland Partnership – Prevention and Remission of Type 2 Diabetes, Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland, Food Standards Scotland.</b>		

## Funding

Was provided in two phases by East of Scotland Partnership for the Prevention and Remission of Type 2 Diabetes. The Discovery Phase (Phase 1) had an allocation of up to £10,000 with up to £50,000 available for the Implementation Phase (Phase 2). A total of £60,176 was allocated to projects during the two year period from January 2021 to April 2023.

The largest sums were spent ensuring community based staff hours were available to co-ordinate work including delivery of the Community Lunch and Outdoor Activities and to participate in the Working Group and associated meetings. Due to the slippage of some of the actions and the 'in-kind' donations of some resources at the end of March there was a small unallocated sum of £4348.95. This is allocated to the final completion costs for one action will enable replenishment of some of the resources for the project.

## Methodology

Methodology developed by Leeds Beckett University and Public Health England was used to implement a Whole Systems Approach in Eyemouth. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/820783/Whole\\_systems\\_approach\\_to\\_obesity\\_guide.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/820783/Whole_systems_approach_to_obesity_guide.pdf)

The first stage of the approach was to build knowledge and understanding of the local picture to explore what was already happening in Eyemouth to support diet and healthy weight. The Working Group gathered information about the range of activities and services currently being provided and built up a list of active stakeholders. An online questionnaire was developed and circulated to stakeholders. Questions were asked to develop an understanding of the actions that were already happening in Eyemouth. These included:

- What do you do to support children, young people, families and adults in Eyemouth to eat well, be physically active and maintain a healthy weight?
- What do you do to specifically support children, families and adults in Eyemouth who are an unhealthy weight to eat well, and be physically active?
- Where, when and to what age group is this support offered in Eyemouth?
- Is there a cost?

## Engagement

Community engagement was challenging due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic and the lack of opportunities for face to face working at that time. Due to the community led aspect of the project, members of staff from a range of community based organisations were invited to join the Working Group and this proved to be essential in terms of generating positive engagement with local people.

In addition to this, some local community organisations engaged with people in their own networks to promote the project and share opportunities that would support people to get

involved, an example being a community group who works with parents of young children. Parents who were unable to participate in the workshops were supported to feed in their views and thoughts through smaller focus group sessions.

Engagement through existing pre-covid networks also proved useful and information was circulated through local social media pages. An article published in The Berwickshire News was helpful in explaining the background to the project when it was in its early stages, with follow up articles published in the monthly Eyemouth Living publication that was delivered to all households in Eyemouth.

## Workshops

Following initial engagement there were three workshops which were held over a period of three months between 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 and 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

The first workshop aimed to develop a collective understanding amongst participants of the issue of diet and healthy weight. It provided the background and context to the issue and then participants developed causal maps of the local system that influences overweight and obesity.

During the second workshop, participants created a vision and renamed the Whole Systems Approach. Participants felt it was important for the project to have a more meaningful name that would resonate with local people and it was thereafter known locally as 'Eyemouth Gateway to Good Health'. During this workshop, key priorities were identified to focus efforts on supporting diet and healthy weight, eating well and being physically active.

The third workshop created an opportunity for participants to explore the priorities in more detail and three themes for action were identified. These were: 1) Communication 2) Family participation and learning 3) Outdoor Activities.

## Themes Identified by Stakeholders

During the workshops, three priority themes and eight areas for action were identified by participants.

Priority Theme 1 Communication	Priority Theme 2 Family Participation and Learning	Priority Theme 3 Outdoor Activities
Action 1 – Eyemouth Living Publication	Action 2 – Book Boxes	Action 5 – Visual Map
	Action 3 – Play Spaces	Action 6 – Junior parkrun
	Action 4 – Community Lunch	Action 7 – Cycling
		Action 8 – Outdoor Activities, including cooking

## Progress to March 2023

### Action 1 – Eyemouth Living Publication

- Eyemouth Living - 32 pages of health promoting articles including healthy recipes, community food growing, gardening and a range of other information
- 14,000 copies of Eyemouth Living delivered between December 2021 and April 2023, advertising opportunities for physical activity in Eyemouth
- Over 50 groups or organisations submitted articles
- Eyemouth Living is embedded as regular business of Eyemouth Development Trust and regular distribution will continue

## **Action 2 – Book Boxes**

- Three Book Boxes with more than 30 books in each box are available in venues in Eyemouth
- Books cover a range of issues including diet and healthy eating
- Planning with Early Years practitioners to extend the availability of books focussed on health and wellbeing, including healthy eating
- Monitoring the use of the books has been difficult however most books that were rated were given a positive rating

## **Action 3 – Play Spaces**

- 21 parents engaged in conversations to provide feedback about existing play spaces in Eyemouth, providing suggestions for small upgrades that would support their children to be physically active
- Sharing of collated feedback with Scottish Borders Council supported local action to be taken
- Repairs have been made to play spaces and improvements made
- Parents are keen to continue to provide feedback and be involved in the future planning of play spaces

## **Action 4 – Community Lunch**

- 10 Community Lunch volunteers gained REHIS accreditation in Elementary Food Hygiene
- Community Lunch volunteers gained new skills in relation to healthier food choices, food preparation and health and wellbeing
- Collaborative work between local groups to develop a community lunch supported action to promote healthy eating
- Community Lunch has contributed to a reduction in food waste

## **Action 5 – Visual Map**

- Young people have learned digital mapping skills to produce maps of Eyemouth that show local walks and trails as well as other assets that support health and wellbeing
- Young people are being supported to engage and provide their views about what keeps them well and what is available in Eyemouth to support health and wellbeing
- Local young people are being supported to create an interactive clay mosaic art map that will be installed in Eyemouth, showing health assets, with links to other community groups and resources, this work will be completed during summer-autumn 2023

## **Action 6 – Junior parkrun**

- Permission for land use was complex and established through taking a whole systems approach
- Local champion led the development and set up of a junior parkrun and grew a group of volunteers
- Between August 2022 and April 2023, 113 individual children took part in junior parkrun
- 59 volunteers supported the free event
- Local promotion is ongoing to support children's participation in the event, supported by the national junior parkrun network

## **Action 7 – Cycling**

- Significant time invested in building local and national networks to support cycling and cycling safety in Eyemouth
- Programme of local training and safety awareness sessions for children and staff in local nurseries and schools
- Junior Road Safety Officers in Eyemouth Primary School have informed local action to promote cycling safety, for example making their own bespoke high visibility vests
- Provision of safety equipment for cycling and planned work to install cycle racks across a number of locations in Eyemouth

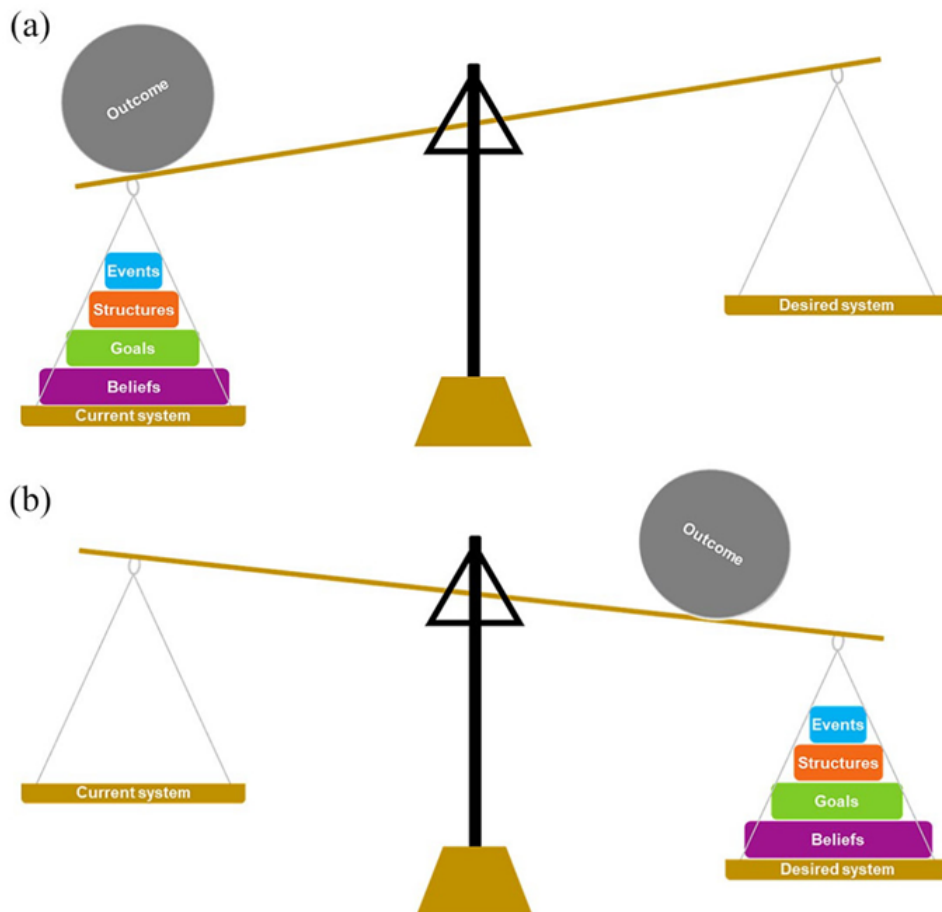
## Action 8 – Outdoor Activities

- Local network of skilled practitioners established to support the development of a programme of outdoor activities and encourage more connection to nature
- Programme of free training provided for staff and volunteers to support delivery of outdoor training sessions with 12 group leads trained
- An outdoor activities free resource pack developed and available for groups to use, hosted on the Outside the Box website <https://otbds.org/outdoor-activities/>
- A store of equipment is available for free local use, held in Eyemouth Community Centre and managed by a local volunteer

## Impact and Reflections

This report has outlined a brief overview of a locally developed plan to help support healthy weight, eating well and health inequalities.

In order to assess the impact of Eyemouth Whole Systems Approach, it is important to present some of the issues encountered during its implementation. Part of Leeds Beckett methodology includes consideration of the Action Scales Model. The Action Scales Model is a visual way of representing a complex system using a depiction of a set of scales and weights. It is a useful tool to understand the system and to help generate ideas for change.



There are four levels within the system which creates an obesogenic environment and therefore helps planners and people aiming for system change to identify the likely impact on the overall system of a particular activity or project. By aiming for change at the 'weightier' levels we are more likely to tip the balance in the system to support healthy weight.

Viewed from this perspective the actions undertaken through Whole Systems Approach can be seen to map most frequently to action relating to Events (for example the Community Lunch) and Structures (for example support from Scottish Borders Council to confirm suitable space for junior parkrun).



Action to change beliefs in the system is likely to be challenging in this context given the cultural significance of food and wellbeing and the sensitivity in relation to talking about child healthy weight. For maximum impact Noble et al refresh the need to ensure 'coherence' across the actions. At a community or operational level this can create tension. For example, one way to ensure sustainability for Eyemouth Living is through generating advertising income. However, those establishments most likely to be in a position to pay for advertising include food suppliers whose main motivation and menu choices may not align with the overall ambition of reducing child healthy weight.

Across many of the Whole Systems Approach pilot areas there is also an awareness that people's beliefs about and attitudes to what food might be considered 'healthy' vary and, if providing food in a community setting, at times it is a balancing act between what is perceived to be attractive in terms of food choices and providing the opportunity for social interaction both of which are important for wellbeing.

Conversely, the value of physical activity is often seen as a 'given' and, alongside infrastructure projects there has been success in some of the structural aspects of support to cycling, for example, the installation of repair station and cycle shed.

It is recognised that whole system change is unlikely to happen within the two-year life-span of a project such as the Eyemouth Whole Systems Approach. In Eyemouth it has been shown how it is possible to make a difference to some levels in the system, however, a bigger scale sustainable change is likely to need higher level influence, potentially even legislation, to create the conditions for health and wellbeing.

## Looking Forward

In May 2023, a stakeholder workshop was held in Eyemouth with project leads, members of the Working Group and Governance Group and a representative from Obesity Action Scotland, who have provided national support. The session aimed to reflect the successes and challenges of taking forward a Whole Systems Approach in Eyemouth as well as developing an overview of what they would recommend to other areas who were interested in developing a similar approach.

Feedback from the workshop has highlighted important factors in taking forward a Whole Systems Approach and these include:

- Identifying key stakeholders at an early stage
- Ensuring the adequate commitment of time and resource of partners
- The importance of governance structures
- Appropriate timescales and funding
- Time taken at the start of the process to understand and map community resources
- Effective engagement to support the development of projects that are important to community health
- Working in a defined community of appropriate size
- Funding

On 8 June 2023 representatives from Eyemouth work presented at the national Whole System Approach in Scotland conference. Through attending that conference we have identified that there is potential to support the existing work and enhance its impact through wider system approaches.



## Next Steps

This report will be presented to key stakeholders in Borders, initially via the Community Planning Partnership where we hope to present a case for building on the success of Eyemouth WSA through exploring local levers to mitigate our obesogenic environment.

These levers could include consideration of restricting food advertising and monitoring access to unhealthy foods. There is the potential to work with food outlets to explore healthier options.

Other ways to help support child health include increasing the uptake of school meals; uptake of physical activity and promoting breastfeeding and healthy introduction to solids.

There are existing routes for these discussions through the Place Making Programme; early discussions for a Food Strategy for Borders and planning for a local physical activity strategy.

It is hoped that we can continue to build on the success generated by people in Eyemouth to create a healthier future for our children.

## Further Information and Appendices

For the full version of the Whole Systems Approach report click [here](#).

### Links to other useful information:

Obesity Action Scotland Website: <https://www.obesityactionscotland.org/whole-systems-approach/what-is-a-whole-systems-approach/>

Public Health Scotland Website: <https://www.publichealthscotland.scot/our-organisation/about-public-health-scotland/supporting-whole-system-approaches/>

Appendix 1 - Project outcomes click [here](#)

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Butland, B., Jebb, S., Kopelman, P., et al. (2007) *Foresight. Tackling obesity: Future choices—Project report*. Government Office for Science, London, 1-161. Available [here](#).
- <sup>2</sup> Rutter, H., Cavill, N., Bauman, A., & Bull, F. (2019). *Systems approaches to global and national physical activity plans*. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 97(2), 162–165. <https://doi.org/10.2471/BLT.18.220533>.
- <sup>3</sup> Leeds Beckett University (2022) *Systems Approaches*, [Obesity Institute Website](#).
- <sup>4</sup> Public Health Reform. (2019). *Whole System Approach for the Public Health Priorities; Local Partnerships and Whole System Approach overview*. Public Health Reform. Available [here](#).
- <sup>5</sup> Jones, A., Bentham, G., Foster, C., et al. (2007) *Foresight Tackling Obesity: Future Choices – Obesogenic Environments – Evidence Review*. Government Office for Science, London 161.

## Need to contact us

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