



Introduction

Obesity is a complex problem that is linked to poorer health outcomes and can lead to several health conditions such as Type 2 Diabetes and high blood pressure. With the majority of adults either overweight or obese (64.5%¹) in England, the pressures on the health system are vast and increasing rapidly. There are multiple drivers of obesity such as the wider environment and infrastructure, biology, physiology, income, education and social groups, economy, culture and behaviour, however at a simplistic level excess weight gain occurs when energy intake exceeds energy expenditure.

Whilst everyone is susceptible to obesity, the Marmot review highlighted that income, social deprivation and ethnicity have an important impact on the likelihood of becoming obese². NCMP data analysis indicates obesity prevalence increases with increased socioeconomic deprivation, with prevalence almost twice as much in the most 10% deprived of children compared to the least 10% deprived.

In order to achieve our vision and mission and to address health inequalities we need collective action across each of these factors at a local, regional and national level. This will only be possible through a collaborative, partnership approach across agencies.

Within Buckinghamshire we have adopted a Whole Systems Approach to healthy weight. This approach requires leadership from the top, with Buckinghamshire Council holding the overall plan and engaging partners across the county including health, social care, the community and voluntary sector, planning, housing, transport, regeneration and environment. Additionally, local businesses, workplaces and the wider community themselves all have a role to play making better use of resources, seeking opportunities for change and working towards a vision of better health and wellbeing. It goes beyond collaboration and individual contributions of each organisation and focuses on how the system works as a whole to make the solution “more than the sum of its parts”.

¹ [Obesity Profile - Data | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)

² Marmot review (2010)

Buckinghamshire Obesity and Physical Activity Data

Obesity:

The percentage of adults in Buckinghamshire who are overweight or obese increased from 60% in 2021/22 to 65.9% in 2023/24. With some wards having much higher levels of overweight than others. Buckinghamshire however compares well with other areas in the South-East and England in terms of the percentage of adults who are classified as obese, although it is still high at 19.8% (23/24), a reduction from 23.7% (22/23). [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)

Additionally, only 36.5% of adults in Buckinghamshire are currently meeting the recommended '5-a-day' fruit and vegetable intake (23/24) [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)

Obesity rates in early pregnancy in Buckinghamshire (23.8%), lower than both the South East (25.1%) and England averages (26.2%). [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)

In children, 1 in 5 Reception aged child (4-5 years old) (18.6%) were overweight or obese increasing significantly to 1 in 3 in Year 6 (10–11-year-olds) (30.1%). Boys have a higher prevalence of obesity than girls for both age groups. The percentage of children moving from a healthy weight in reception to overweight (including obesity) in year 6 is 18.2% compared to 21.5% in England. [Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care](#)

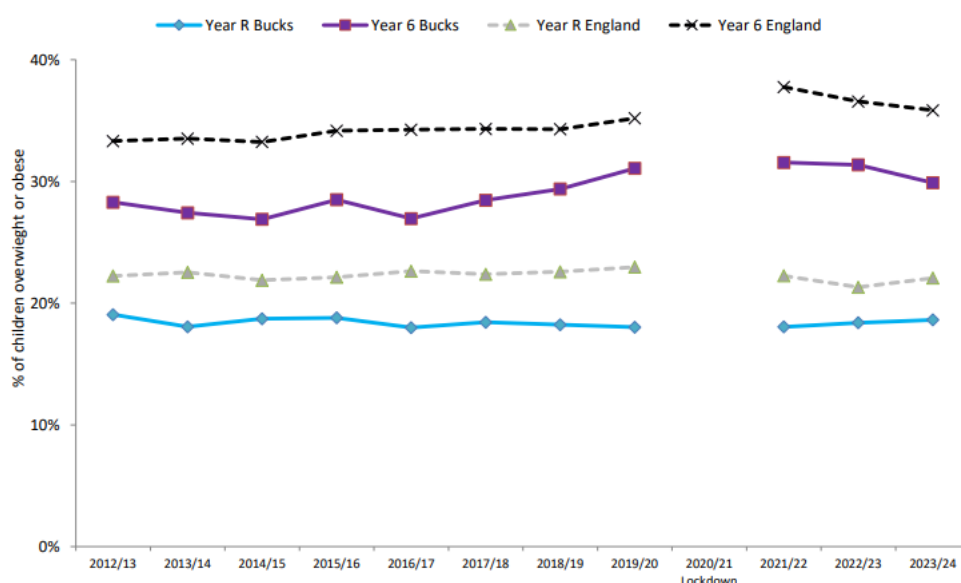


Figure 1: Excess weight in Reception and Year 6 (2012/13-2023/24)

A third (33.2%) of Year 6 children from an Asian ethnic group are overweight or obese. This is statistically significantly higher than the other ethnic groups combined (28.8%). Almost a third (27.3%) of Year 6 children from a White ethnic group are overweight or obese. This is statistically significantly lower than the other ethnic groups combined (34.5%).

Almost half (46.2%) of Year 6 children from a Black ethnic group are overweight or obese. This is statistically significantly higher than the other ethnic groups combined (29.1%). Some of the differences above may be due to the influence of other factors such as area deprivation. Physiological differences and body composition can be confounding factors when making comparisons between groups.

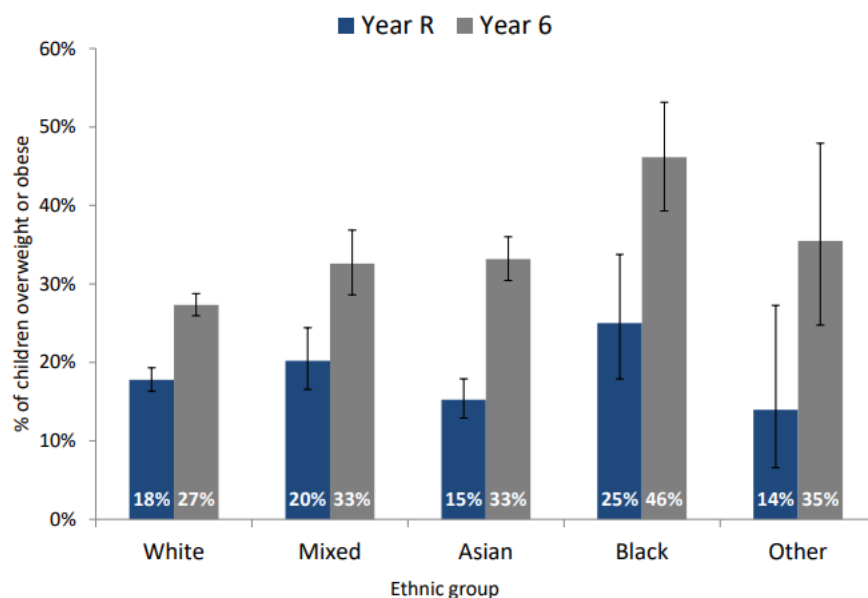


Figure 3: Excess weight in children by ethnicity and school year, 2023/24

Significant inequalities also exist across the county, with a disproportionate number of those living in our more deprived communities more likely to be affected by obesity. By the time children reach year 6, there is a stark trend related to deprivation, with those children in the more deprived communities having the highest rates of overweight and obesity – 38% in DQ5 compared to 23% in DQ1. The below chart shows Aylesbury with 35%, High Wycombe with 40% and Wexham & Ivers with 48% as the community boards with the highest percentage of Year 6 children who are overweight or obese.

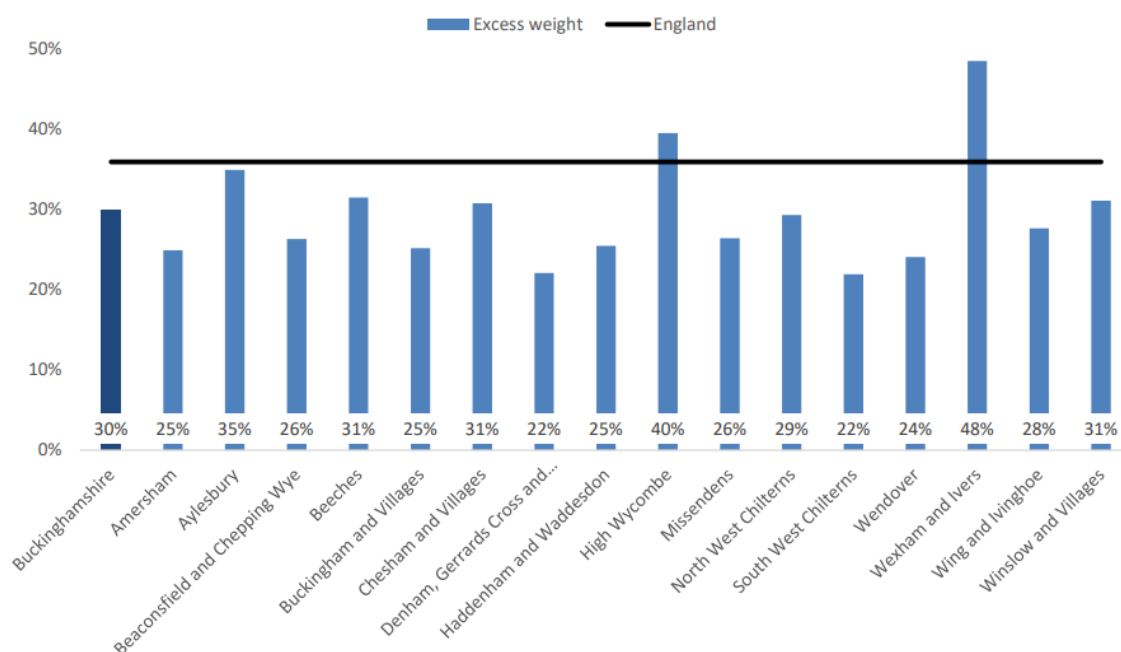


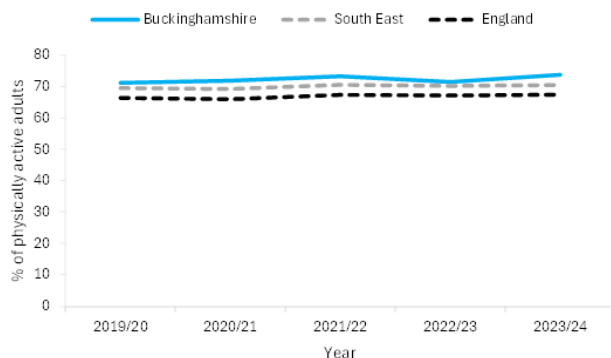
Figure 1: Percentage of Year 6 children who are overweight or obese in Buckinghamshire by Community Board, 2023/24

The wider impacts findings above clearly demonstrate that local levels of overweight and obesity are not just an issue for public health. Impacts on economic burden, stigmatisation and discrimination, productivity loss, the environment and education align to wider local priorities and make the case for why addressing obesity should receive priority from all sectors.

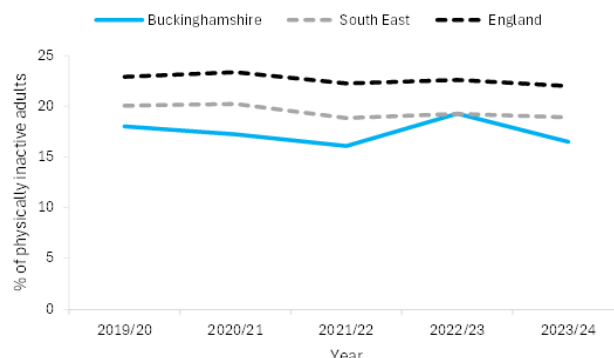
Physical Activity:

Within Buckinghamshire 3 in 4 (73.7%) of adults are physically active which is significantly better than the England average in 2023/24. The percentage of physically inactive adults in Buckinghamshire was significantly better than the England average in 2023/24. [Physical activity - Data](#)

Physically active adults (19+), 2019/20 – 2023/24¹

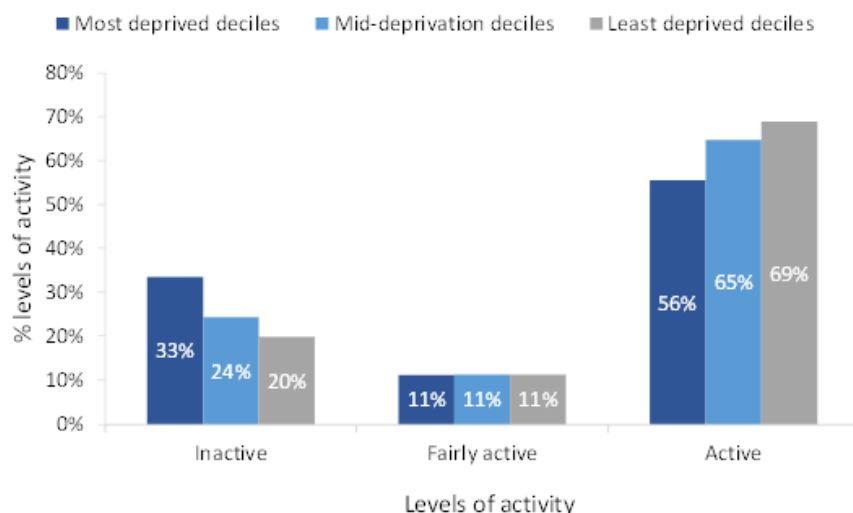


Physically inactive adults (19+), 2019/20 – 2023/24¹

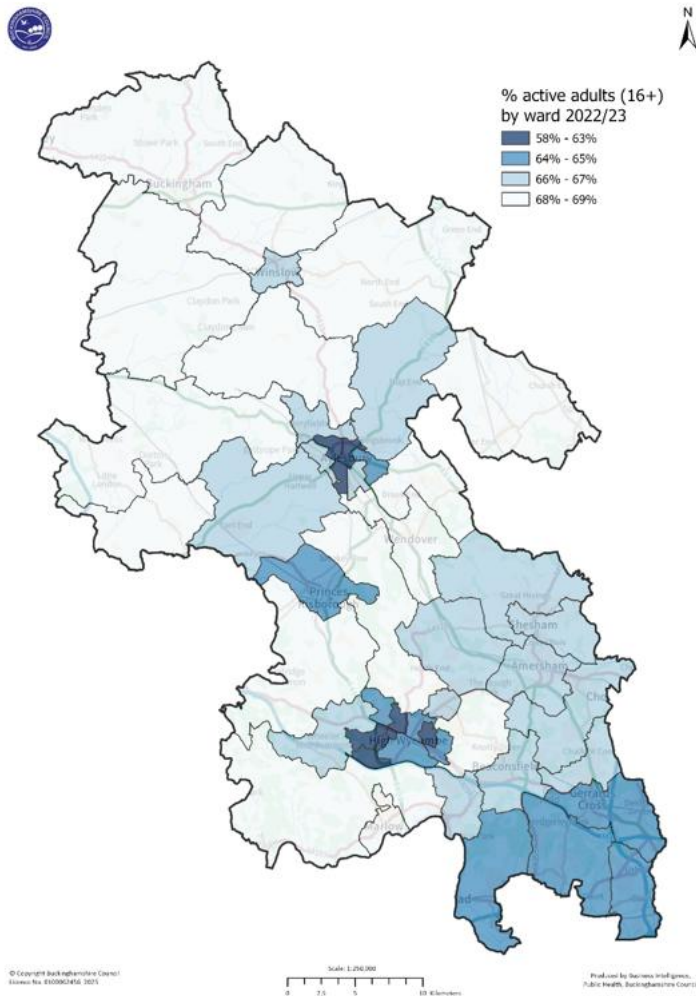


As is shown with the obesity data there are differences in activity levels when compared with deprivation levels. In the least deprived deciles 69% of adults are physically active compared with 56% in the most deprived deciles. The converse is true for those that are inactive as in the most deprived deciles there are 33% and in the least deprived deciles 20%. [Physical activity - Data](#)

Levels of physical activity in adults (16+) by deprivation decile, 2023/24³



Ward based data indicates that lowest levels of active adults are within the wards of Aylesbury, High Wycombe and the south of Buckinghamshire (2022/23).



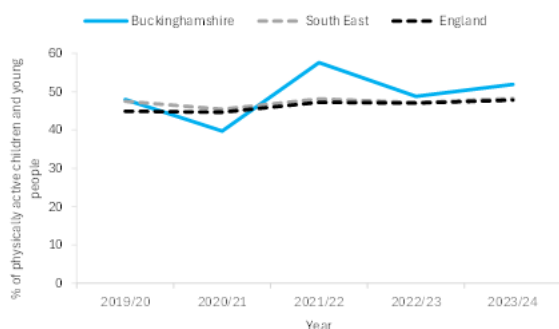
The percentage of adults using walking as a means of travel is significantly lower than South-East and England percentages. Only 15.3% of adults in Buckinghamshire using walking for travel at least 3 times per week (2022/23). [Physical activity - Data](#)

In older adults' muscle strength is a priority to reduce the risk of falls, injuries, and functional dependence. As we age muscle strength declines however strength training can be effective at any age for maintaining muscle mass. Within Buckinghamshire 46.2% of adults over 65 years undertake 2 or more muscle strength activities per week compared to 37.1% across England. [Active Lives | Sport England](#)

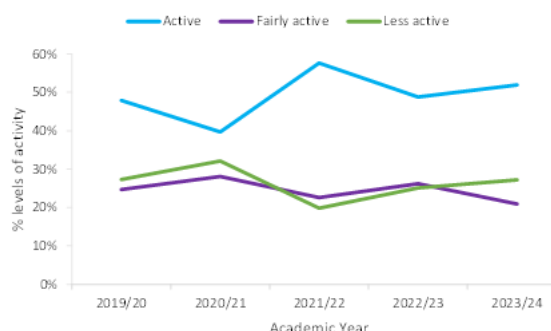
Only 51.9% of children and young people are deemed as physically active (2023/24) which is similar to England. Trend data does indicate a significant increase in those physically active despite

fluctuations in the year-to-year trends between 2019/20 and 2023/24. [Physical activity - Data](#)

Physically active children and young people, 2019/20 – 2023/24¹



Levels of physical activity in children and young people, 2019/20 – 2023/24³



Our Vision and Aims

The vision of the whole systems approach to healthy weight is to create a local environment where residents are living healthier, happier and more active lifestyles, free from obesity.

Our mission is to empower all residents of Buckinghamshire to be able to lead an active and healthy lifestyle. We will work together, across the whole public health system in Buckinghamshire to tackle obesity, supporting behaviour change in the system and for residents, promoting healthier lifestyle choices. We want to make it easier for people to make informed choices about their lifestyle habits and reduce the availability and promotion of high fat, sugar and salt foods in favour of healthier options, creating healthier environments.

Sitting alongside the whole systems approach to a healthier weight is a physical activity strategy and action plan which aims to unite stakeholders, delivering a system-wide action plan to reduce barriers to movement and create the building blocks for a more active county. Our overall objective is to support more people to move more often, decreasing sedentary behaviour and increasing active behaviours in all residents across Buckinghamshire.

Challenging targets have been set against the whole systems approach work, against which partner led action plan, focused on the whole system have been developed with clearly defined priorities identified annually.

Defined targets within the Physical Activity strategy: Move More are:

- 1. Reduce the number of adults and children who are overweight or obese**
 - a. Reduce the proportion of Year 6 children identified as overweight or obese from 31.5% (2021/22) to 26% by 2029
 - b. Reduce the proportion of adults aged 18+ identified as overweight or obese from 60% (2021/22) to 55% by 2029
- 2. Increase the activity levels of both adults and children and young people**
 - a. Increase the proportion of adults aged 19+ achieving 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week from 73.2% (2021/22) to 78% by 2029
 - b. Increase the proportion of children aged 5-16 achieving 60 active minutes per day from 48.8% (2022/23) to 54% by 2029
- 3. Increase the physical activity levels of older adults aged 65 plus**
 - a. Increase the proportion of older adults achieving 2 or more sessions of muscle strength exercises per week from 38.1% (2021/22) to 43% by 2029.

To achieve these challenging targets the action plan draws upon the wider system by addressing key themes across the life-course against which annual priorities are identified:

Our Overall Priority Areas for Action

Food Environment: Increase healthy eating in Buckinghamshire:

- Work with partners to improve the diet and nutrition of the population in Buckinghamshire, across the life course
- Create an environment where healthy food is the preferred choice, promoted and accessible to all, whether eating in or out of home
- Tackle food insecurity across the county
- Improve the knowledge, skills, confidence, and opportunity to improve the populations diet and nutrition

Physical Activity: Increasing physical activity levels in Buckinghamshire:

- Getting residents of Buckinghamshire regardless of age to move more
- Work with the sport and physical activity workforce to ensure that physical activity is for all
- Increase awareness of the range of opportunities within local communities, allowing the population of Buckinghamshire to find an option which best suits their personal preference and needs
- Make walking and cycling the easier choice for short journeys or part of liner journeys wherever possible
- Work with health and social care organisations across the system to embed physical activity into policies and processes

Active Environments:

- Ensure that the built environment is developed to promote and enable physical activity and healthy food choices
- Work together in partnership to counter obesogenic development in planning applications
- Work towards reducing the provision of unhealthy food across Buckinghamshire e.g takeaways, pop-up concessions
- Facilitate active travel in local transport plans across Buckinghamshire

Children and Young People:

- Encourage active play and learning
- Support schools to implement health related activities
- Work with key partners to explore opportunities with the schools according to population need
- Increase awareness of local free / low cost opportunities for children/young people and their families to move more

Prevention and Support:

- Commission services and develop partnerships that enable identification and early intervention for vulnerable children and adults
- Deliver accessible community weight management provision across the life course
- Ensure health and social care professionals can recognise signs of unhealthy weight and have informed conversations with residents

Our primary focus is to support people across Buckinghamshire to live healthier, happier and more active lives. Working to a common goal, the whole system action plan aims to address inequalities and help us tackle obesity and inactivity across the county.

TAKING ACTION TOGETHER

