



**All-island Obesity Action Forum Workshop
Childhood Obesity
25th June 2013, Stormont Hotel, Belfast**

Roundtable discussion

Introduction

Delegates were asked in their groups to discuss the types of resources or advice available to prompt parents to identify their own child's weight status.

Common points arising from group discussions

A number of groups mentioned the lack of resources and the need for a more joined up approach/ co-ordination of existing services to address this public health issue. The majority felt that health professionals including school nurses and family GPs are the first point of contact for parents and that there should be an increase in the number of health checks at critical stages of a child's development. Delegates also highlighted the need for more encouragement/ support for parents at both a personal and community level and for more training for those first responders. Many of the groups mentioned the important role schools had to play from providing breakfast clubs to after school activities.

Full discussion points

Note: To ensure anonymity in participant responses, tables have been renamed and reordered. Please note also that some tables did not take notes.

Group A

Table A identified a number of ways in which parents could be supported. These included;

- Inviting parents to a parent information morning or health promotion mornings and provide educational sessions on healthy snacks, cooking programmes etc
- Do parents understand significance of growth charts? Need to teach parents on how to use them correctly
- Health professionals need to begin using the lingo/terminology that is understood by parents
- There is a lack of health visitors, children only seen up to 5 years. School nurses needs to have more intervention after five years
- Schools allow teenagers out of the school grounds for lunch and so many go to fast food outlets. Schools need to introduce healthy food at lunchtime policies.
- Decrease amount of time spent in cars/ buses etc. and start walking

- Schools not doing enough PE. No after school activities in school/can't get children involved
- If **safefood** can do a TV ad on waist measurements for adults do one for children

Group B

Group B highlighted the need for more monitoring after 4 years of age. Height/weight status (growth charts) are available up to 4 years of age but there are no known resources available for parents after this. One delegate mentioned that in Finland height/weight measurements are taken on an annual basis at school. Could the same be done in schools in NI and ROI?

This group also expressed concerns over the possible development of eating disorders. They felt that parents are possibly more worried about eating disorders e.g. anorexia.

Group C

Group C felt that resources in this area are practically non-existent however they did reinforce the key contact opportunities posed by routine health visits with school nurses/GPs and other health professionals. This group highlighted the need to use the terms 'overweight' and 'obese' and encourage parents to recognise that these are medical terms. Group C also proposed that any childhood obesity campaigns or initiatives need to focus on health risks and how/when this information is presented.

They highlighted other initiatives which could be rolled out on an all-island basis. These include;

- Sure Starts and community groups
- Year 1 – Year 8 children's measurement programme
- More 'zero' tolerance to unhealthy snacks in schools
- Need for more 'family' approach interventions – community links sustainable
- Need to look at high level policy/legislation

Group D

Group D raised and identified a number of issues relevant to this area including;

- School nurses checks at key stages.
- Ensure appropriate nutrition education of contacts including nurses, GP's , health workers
- Health professionals need to keep personal opinion out of communicating evidence based advice
- Television/radio campaigns/web sites
- Posters to encourage parents to ask questions to key professionals GP's and Health nurses
- Make it more acceptable for people to talk about weight – try and breakdown this taboo/stigma through positive messages
- Post- pregnancy weight and support information given via packs to all pregnant women

Group E

This group identified the need for systems to be put in place to provide support, resources (training on appropriate interventions at critical stages of child's development) for the many people who interact with children (health visitors, teachers, sports leaders/organisations, community leaders). Group E felt there is a lack of co-ordination of the many services that have an important role in addressing prevention of childhood obesity and especially for those children already affected by obesity co-ordination of these services is critical. Early-years is an ideal time, pre-school stage perhaps to promote healthy eating via health programmes and health visitors should be a point of contact and support at this early stage. Group E also identified the need for;

- Formal training and support for health visitors
- Support for parents key via schools programmes
- Peer support and encouragement as bullying has become a big problem for overweight children
- Encouragement at the community level
- Educating parents with practical advice for example healthy food on a budget